S. 18. 88

THE CAUSES OF THE Decay of Christian Piety.

OR AN

IMPARTIAL SURVEY

Of the Ruines of

CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

Undermin'd by Unchristian Practice.

Written by the Author of

THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.

INIMICVS HOMO FECIT HOC. *Matth.* 13.

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REPAIRE

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Mr. *Garthwait*,

HAVING in my hands a *Practical* Treatiſe concerning *The Cauſes of the Decay of Chriſtian Piety* ſo viſible in this our Age; written by the Excellent *Author* of The *WHOLE DUTY OF MAN*: and having obtain'd permiſſion to make it publick, I was in ſome doubt whether the preſent diſturb'd State of affairs, would not make it reaſonable to delay the Edition: but conſidering that times of difficulty and trouble bring thoughts of Vertue into their minds, who forgot their Duty and their God in affluence and quiet: I am apt to think a Diſcourſe of this Kind ſeaſonable enough at this time.--------

Almighty God give you ſome repair for your * late great Calamity: As it was the *Authors* kindneſs that you ſhould have the offer of this Tract, whatever it prove, ſo I think it will be a little the more ſeaſonable, that it comes as a New-years Gift, *&c.*

* *The late Fire in* London.

Your very loving Friend,

January, 1667. H. E.

THE PREFACE.

THOUGH this be the first appearance this Tract has made in the world, yet its Being is of somewhat a more ancient date; it having received its lineaments and perfect form some years since: when the Author not having partiality enough to think it worthy publick view; hast adjudg'd it, if not to perpetual darkness, yet at least to a long indefinite suspension from seeing light. In this interval, 'tis more than probable some passages may have lost much of their propriety to the present state of affairs, they having been adapted to circumstances which may since have received some change: and herein I must bespeak the Readers candor, to make such allowances as the matter shall require; of which yet I suppose there will not occur very many, or very important occasions.

BUT would God I were to apologize for a yet far greater absurdity, that our scene were so shifted, that the whole design of the ensuing discourse, might become one entire impertinence, and that our more eminent conformity to the rules of our Christian institution, might supersede these disquisitions above our failances and aberrations. But alas, I find I have pitcht upon a subject not like to be out-dated; vice daily gaining not only strength, but impudence: nay,

we

we are not only become witneſſes againſt our ſelves by declaring our Sin as Sodom, *but we have forced God alſo to atteſt againſt us by puniſhing us in a manner no leſs conſpicuous and manifeſt. And ſurely then 'tis more than time for us to take the Prophets advice,* Hag. 1. 7. to conſider our ways, *to reflect not only on thoſe robuſt, gyant-like provocations which have thus bid defiance to Heaven; but alſo to ſift out thoſe ſecret incendiaries that have inflamed us to this mad daring; to examine what that* חמר, *that inflamable* bitumen, *the untemper'd morter is with which we build our Babel, by diſcovering thoſe miſperſwaſions and falſe confidences, wherein many of our other guilts are founded: in order to which this ſlight Tract offers its feeble, yet well meant aids; being forced out of its retirement, and like* Cræſus *his dumb Son, compell'd to ſpeak by impulſe of the preſent exigent: and how deſpicable ſoever the Mite contributed be in itſelf, yet if it may provoke the more wealthy to caſt in richer gifts, it may prove no unprofitable agent for the* Corban. *'Tis evident this is a ſeaſon which not only warrants, but exacts the moſt importunate endeavours of perſwading men to thoſe things that belong to their Peace.*

FOR *although 'tis true, that every ſtate of ſin ſets us alſo in a ſtate of hoſtility with God, yet our preſent condition ſeems to have advanced us beyond the common degrees even of that. 'Tis we know, high inſolence againſt a Prince to deſpiſe and violate his laws, but when to that are ſuperadded contumelies, and deſign'd affronts to his perſon, this is ſuch an accumulated outrage, as will vanquiſh the moſt reſolv'd*

resolv'd Patience. And this alas appears to be our case: we have long indulg'd to our selves the breach of all Divine laws, gratified every appetite, every passion and lust with the forfeiture of our allegiance, and as if this would not serve to render us irreconcileable enough to God, we are now grown to subjoyn malice to licentiousness; project not so much to please our selves, as to displease him; profess a contempt not only of his commands, but himself; and seek no less to dethrone Him, than abrogate those. Thus have we made it a kind of personal quarrel, and by those impious blasphemies we daily dart against Heaven, do as it were dare the Divine Majesty to vindicate itself. Whether his great longanimity may have given our Hectors *a fancy, that they had vapour'd God (as they are us'd to do men) into a tameness, I shall not examine: but his late proceedings with us sufficiently testifie that he means no longer to decline our challenge. He now appears to avow the enmity as openly as we have done; and has already given us competent essays, how* fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, *Heb.* 10. 31.

'TIS true indeed that he has formerly own'd his controversie with our Land, and by a long series of great and heavy calamities attested himself the God to whom vengeance belongeth, Psal. 94. 1. *Yet as great Monarchs use to quell lesser insurrections by their Lieutenants, and subordinate Officers, but when the rebellion grows high and desperate, then to encounter it in their own persons; so is it here observable that God then Chastised, and tried to*

reduce us by inferiour instruments, found us out Lictors *among our selves, and made one mans sin the punishment of anothers: but now as if he had the same jealousie for his honour which* Joab *had at the siege of* Rabba *for* Davids, 2 Sam. 12. 28. *as if he fear'd to be rival'd in the glory of our ruine, he takes us into his own hand, marks us out, as he did* Pharaoh, *to be the Trophies of his own peculiar vengeance, appearing signally against us in all the dreadful solemnities of an enraged enemy.*

FOR first, has he not as Moses *speaks,* Deut. 32. 41. *whet his glittering* Sword? *Nay, has he not moreover (in the Scripture stile) made it drunk with bloud? by sweeping away multitudes of us in a raging PESTILENCE, which March't from one part of the Nation to another in a kind of Triumphant progress, as if it had receiv'd the same mandate God gave* Abraham, *Gen.* 13. 17. Arise, walk through the land, in the length thereof and in the breadth thereof, for unto thee will I give it. *Whether it may not thus fatally complete its course, notwithstanding the halt it seems to make, and pass from our* Dan *to our* Beersheba, *is a question that can with no probability be resolv'd in the negative; for as it is not to be doubted but there were in* Judea *as great sinners as those on whom the Tower of* Siloam *fell,* Luke 13. *that those who have hitherto escaped have an equal share in the provoking cause of the Judgment: So also that great* unsensibleness *many of us shew of what others groan under, is a very ominous abode; it being not only a dangerous symptome, but a probable means of drawing*

drawing that calamity to our ſelves. When God ſees we will ſuffer nothing by way of conſent and ſympathy with others, 'tis but equal we have our part in a more direct and immediate infliction, and feel what we would not compaſſionate. Thucydides *mentions it as the effect of the great Plague at* Athens *that it had extinguiſht humanity; brought in a kind of ferity and barbarouſneſs among them, rendring them openly villanous to men, and blaſphemous againſt God;* θεῶν φόβος, ἢ ἀνθρώπων νόμος· οὐδεὶς ἀπεῦργε, *there was no reſtraint of law or religion, one part being deſperate upon proſpect of their danger, the other preſumptuous upon the contemplation of their Eſcape; and ſure if we look impartially, ours will appear to have had ſomewhat of the ſame operation. Thoſe compaſſions which the novelty it ſeems at firſt gave us to ſufferers in this kind, ſeems now quite extinct; ſo unconcern'd are we grown to every thing that touches us not in our individuals, as if we owned no relation to the* ſpecies *of mankind, though backt alſo with that cloſer tye, which the ſpiritual conſanguinity has ſuperadded. A pregnant indication of this may, I doubt not, be collected (as from many other circumſtances, ſo particularly) from the great haſte has in many places been made, to lay aſide thoſe publick* Humiliations *and interceſſions which were recommended to us as well by the command of Authority, as the common diſtreſs; but have been caſt off without the ſubſtraction of either of thoſe motives. Whether we are duly* mindful of the afflictions of Joſeph, *that cannot afford one day in a moneth for a*

ſolemn reflection on them, I muſt leave to every mans conſcience to diſcuſs. But ſure we are no leſs wanting to our ſelves than them in this neglect; the office being no leſs deſigned for Antidote than cure, to prevent the Judgment where it is not, than to remove it where it is: and if we will neither deprecate on our own behalfs, nor intercede on others; we are ſure as improvident, as uncharitable, and may juſtly expect the fatal event of both.

IN the interim, although the preſent reſpite from deſtruction, and our own deceitful hearts flatter us and ſay Peace, Peace; we have all reaſon to conclude that God is not attoned, the quarrel and hoſtility goes on, and his hand is ſtretcht out ſtill, Eſ. 5.25. *And ſo indeed we find it in other diſmal events. Slaughter we know is not the only effect of War; which as it deſtroys the lives of many, blaſts the ſupports and Joys of more. This conſequence of hoſtility we find well expreſt by the Prophet* Joel 2. 3. The land is as the Garden of *Eden* before them, and behind them a deſolate wilderneſs, *and herein alſo hath the Lord of Hoſts, the great God of battel ſhewed himſelf mighty againſt us, he has invaded us not only with Sword, but* FIRE: *and in ſo ſtupendious manner deſolated the glory of our Land, that no humane fury could have procured, or even have wiſht the like vaſtation and ruines.* That City which was great among the Nations, and Princeſs among the Provinces, *Lam.* 1. 1. lies buried in her own Aſhes, *and is both Funeral-pile and Urn to her ſelf; and what neither foreign nor domeſtick enemies could in a ſucceſſion of many*

ages

ages effect, one blast of the breath of his displeasure, Psal. 18. *has performed in a moment. So verifying even in a literal sense the Apostles affirmation,* Heb. 12. 29. that our God is a consuming fire. Plutarch *tells us when* Fabius *sackt* Tarentum, *he took not away their Images, but said,* ἀπολείπωμεν τὺς θεὺς Ταραντίνοις κεχολωμένους, let us leave the *Tarentines* their Gods that are offended with them. *'Tis our Calamity to be signally under the indignation of our incensed God, which in that great Captains judgment was somewhat more dreadful than the worst inflictions of War: for what industry soever has been used to entitle either the negligence or designs of men unto our overthrow, yet sure never any judgment had more legible marks of Gods immediate hand: such as shew he meant to revenge the abuse of his former gentle methods: that those who would not be reformed by the slighter corrections wherein he dallied with them, might find* a judgment worthy of God, Wisd. 12. 26. *And sure such was this, which both for its greatness and irresistibleness does well own its Author, and shews his wrath was accended to a very excessive heat, that thus poured out itself not only like, but in* Fire, Lam. 2. 4.

I SHALL not here assume the Polititians part, and weigh the detriment we have sustained by it in our civil interest. of which perhaps nothing but time and experience can give us a full estimate; It rather suits my design to observe what relates to our spiritual concerns, whilest Gods dwelling places *were involved in the same ruine with ours; his own peculiar*

portion not exempted, but as the Prophet complains, Eſ. 64. 11. Our holy and beautiful houſes where our fathers praiſed him are burnt with fire: *this though perhaps leaſt conſidered, is ſure not the leaſt ſad circumſtance, had only the ſcenes of our luxury, or our fraud been deſtroyed, it might have ſent us with more fervency to the places of our devotion, and we might have frequented Gods houſes the better, for being deſtituted of our own; but when theſe alſo are made parts of the common heap, 'tis a ſad teſtimonial that our very religion was provoking; That that pageant-like piety which we depoſited in our* CHURCHES, *only to make a ſhew with on holy-days, ſerved only to defile thoſe holy places, and render them ſo polluted as required no ſlighter purgation than that of* FIRE. *'Tis we know not long, ſince thoſe manſions ſacred to the Prince of Peace, were even in the vulgar obvious ſenſe, made magazines for War; but yet more ſo in reference to that Pulpit-wild-fire, which ſet the Nation in combuſtion; whether that ſtrange Fire which ſome of our* Nadabs *and* Abihu's *introduced there, may not (even at this diſtance) have done its part to the drawing down this* FIRE *from Heaven, I leave to their ſerious reflection. But neither the* Hypocrite *nor the* Seditious *muſt ingroſs the guilt of this ruine: The* Atheiſt *eyes with both; for alas, what ſhould God do with Temples among thoſe, who pay him no worſhip? Or why ſhould he let thoſe ſacred monuments remain among them, to whom all memorials of him ſerve but as occaſions, and incentives to blaſpheme him? They have long*

ſaid

ſaid with thoſe in Job, Depart from us, for we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways; *and now 'tis but equitable (I had almoſt ſaid* Civil) *to take them at their word, and no longer reſide among thoſe who ſo avowedly diſclaim him.*

AND this, 'tis much to be feared, may be the portent of this diſmal vaſtation: we know men uſe not to deface thoſe houſes, where they intend to inhabit: and ſure this abhorring his Sanctuary, *and* caſting off his Altar, Lam. 2. *is a dreadful ſign, that he means no longer to continue his reſidence among us; indeed we find in Scripture that his promiſe of cohabiting is always limited to thoſe who own themſelves his people; and therefore when ſo many of us have openly renounced that relation, we can with no juſtice expect the bleſſing appendant to it.*

BUT perhaps this will ſeem to ſuch no formidable thing; Gods ſo withdrawing of himſelf is but agreeable to their wiſhes, a kind of quitting the field to them, and ſo rather matter of complacency than regret: but 'tis to be conſidered that there is another preſence of God that will infallibly ſucceed this; when he removes that of his grace, 'tis to make way for that of his anger; like the Philiſtines *we ſhall know the God of* Iſrael *is among us by his Plagues,* 1 Sam. 5. *or to make a yet more dreadful compariſon, we ſhall like the damned in Hell, diſcern his preſence only in the punitive effects of it, and read his nearneſs in our ſufferings. And ſure this will be but an ill exchange, even to the profaneſt of us, thoſe that have moſt deſpiſed or loathed the*

ſoft breathings of his Word and Spirit; will find it yet harder to endure the whirlwinds of his wrath, which will ſnatch from us thoſe ſecular advantages for whoſe purſuit we have neglected the better part, Luke 10. 42. *and leave us as little of worldly enjoyments, as we deſired to have of ſpiritual.*

O F *this our late Calamities have given us a ſad* Preludium, *and God knows how ſoon we may ſee the laſt ſcene of the fatal Tragedy, it being too probable that this is Gods laſt Experiment upon us, like the Cauſticks and Scarifyings to a Lethargick patient; if this bring us not to ſenſe, we are like to ſleep on to deſtruction: And alas, what uncomfortable ſymtomes appear even in this point alſo. Who is there that (unleſs awakened by his perſonal concernments) ſeems at all to ſtartle at the noiſe of publick ruine? When God in diſpleaſure threatned the* Iſraelites *that he would remit their conduct to* his Angel, *and not go himſelf with them. The text ſays,* they mourned and no man put on his ornaments on him, *Exod.* 33. 4. *or as the* LXX, κατεπένθησεν ἐν πενθικοῖς, *and the Syriack*, ܐܠܐ ܫܩܠܘ ܓܒܪ ܙܝܢܗ ܥܠܘܗܝ they ſtript themſelves of their Armour, their ruffling garb of War, and adpeared in the penitential dreſs of ſackcloth and aſhes: *but now that we are given up not to a conducting but deſtroying Angel, what ſigns of remorſe do we ſhew? What vanity (I fear I may ask what vice) have we ſubſtracted, upon the ſenſe of Gods anger? What nicety in cloaths or diet have we cut off in ſympathy with the nakedneſs and hunger of our afflicted brethren? Nay, do not the unreaſonable*

Jollities

Follities of too many among us, look as if we triumpht in their miſeries, found Muſick in the diſcordant ſounds of their groans, and our own laughter; and emulated that infamous barbarity of Nero, *who played while* Rome *burned? 'Tis mentioned by the Prophet as a moſt prepoſterous thing, a kind of impious Soleciſm to revel under the menace of judgments.* Thus ſaith the Lord, A ſword, a ſword, it is ſharpened to make a ſore ſlaughter, it is furbiſhed that it may glitter, *ſhould we then make mirth?* Ezek. 21. 9, 10. *and certainly it leſs beſits us againſt whom God has not only prepared, but uſed his ſword; who are not only under the threats, but actual Execution of his vengeance: And what is it but interpretatively to prompt him to yet ſharper inflictions, by ſhewing him that theſe have not edge enough to penetrate us? With how much indignation God reſents this perverſe, this contumelious behaviour, we may read,* Eſay 22. 12, 13, 14. In that day did the Lord call to weeping, and mourning, and to baldneſs, and to girding with ſackcloth. and behold joy and gladneſs, ſlaying Oxen and killing Sheep, eating Fleſh and drinking Wine; eating and drinking for to morrow we ſhall dye: *Upon which follows that ſevere denunciation*: Surely this iniquity ſhall not be purged from you till you dye. *Of ſo deep a tincture is this guilt, that 'tis as laſting as our lives, and like the fretting* leproſie *in the houſe,* Levit. 14. 45. *can be removed by nothing but its diſſolution.*

O then let us not add this to the heap of our other provocations, miſtake impudence or deſperation for courage;

courage; and frantickly defie that omnipotence which we are ſure we cannot reſiſt: but ſince it has pleaſed God even in wrath to remember mercy, let us tranſcribe his Copy, be as kind to our ſelves as he has been to us, and ſtop in our carier as he has done in his; not ſo madly affect a full parallel with Sodom *and* Gomorrah, *as to force him to deſtroy that remnant,* Eſ. 1. 9. *which alone diſtinguiſhes our caſe: but rather take pattern from* Nineveh; *cry, and* cry mightily to God, *joyn humiliation to our prayers, and reformation to both. And could we be perſwaded to do this with the ſame ſincerity, and univerſality, we might hope it may be with the ſame ſucceſs alſo: would every one who has contributed to the accending, as induſtriouſly contribute to the appeaſing of Gods wrath: would all who have brought their fire-brands bring alſo their tears to quench them, as there would be no dry Eyes in the Nation at the preſent, ſo might it prevent as great a Generality of weeping ones for the future; ſecure us ſuch a tranquility here, as may calmly convoy us to that impaſſible ſtate,* where all tears ſhall be wiped from our eyes, where there ſhall be no more death, nor ſorrow, nor crying, nor pain, *Rev.* 21. 4.

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CHAP.

REPAIR

K. DAVID

PSALM. 119. v. 136.

Rivers of water run down mine eyes because men Keep not thy Law.

EZEKIEL

EZEKIEL. chap. 37. v. 3
Son of man can these dry Bones
liue? — Lord Thou Knowest

CHAP. I.

The Character of Christian Religion, demonstrating its aptitude to plant exemplary Vertue and Sanctity.

THE holy *Psalmist* gives it as part of the Character of Pious persons, and therewithal a description of their felicity, *Psal.* 92.13. *That they shall bring forth more fruit in their Age*: and what he thus observes of the members disjunctively and apart, reason suggests to be in a higher, and more eminent manner appliable to the whole body united: And it being as well the mark as duty of every single Christian *to grow in grace*, 2 *Pet.* 3.18. we may by all rules of Proportion, conclude that the collective masse of such, the whole Church is by this time near *attained to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*, *Eph.* 4.3. And indeed this is so regular an inference, that whilst the premisses stand firm 'tis impossible to shake the conclusion, the entire body must necessarily augment answerably to the growth of its several parts. And if we should so far let loose to speculation as to forget our experience, if we measure the effect only by the power and energy of the cause, we should surely be as far from doubting the premisses also. Christianity is in itself of so prolifick a nature, so apt to impregnate the hearts and lives of its proselytes, that it is hard to imagine, that any branch should want a due fertility that is engrafted into so vigorous a stock.

FOR

FOR first, in its spring and original it is most supernatural and divine, derived immediately from him, who had nothing more of man than he purposely assumed to draw us the nearer to him as God. He it was that disseminated this doctrine, and that in order to the *purifying to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*; and certainly his choice abundantly justifies its propriety to that end, and his descent from Heaven on that errand puts so venerable a solemnity upon it, that though his descent were very astonishing, yet it will be much more so, that it should fail of the designed effect.

AND indeed did our Faith give us no clue to lead us to the Author, yet its composition would speak it to be of no humane extraction, its precepts are so excellent and refined, so agreeable to the more spiritual part of our temper, and so apt, as to forestall, so to cleanse and sublimate the more gross and corrupt, as shews flesh and bloud never revealed it. Nay farther, so effectually providing for all those advantages to mankind, which the wisest of mens laws have in vain attempted, that methinks they all stand before it like the *Magicians* before *Moses*, and by their impotence tacitly confess it to be the finger of God. 'Twere too large a Theme to confront them in the several instances, let it suffice to observe one which has a common influence on all; and that is the immaculate *cleanness* of heart, which Christs, and only Christs law requires. This is the only proper basis on which to superstruct, first *innocency*, and then

vertue,

vertue, and without this the most rigid exactors of outward purity, do but transcribe the folly of him, who Pumps very laboriously in a Ship, yet neglects to stop the Leak: or the worse tyranny of *Pharaoh* in *requiring Brick without Straw*: so far is it from a severity in our law-giver, thus to limit and restrain our thoughts, that it is an act of the greatest indulgence: by no means the laying on a new burden, but the furnishing us with an Engine to bear with ease that weight which otherwise the stoutest *Atlas* must sink under. And were but this one precept sincerely conformed to, it would not only facilitate but ascertain the obedience to all the rest. If the *first sparks* of ill were quencht within, what possibility is there they should ever break out into a flame? How shall he *kill* that dares not be angry? Be *Adulterous* in act, that did not first transgress in his desire? How shall he be *perjured* that fears an oath? Or *defraud* that permits not himself to covet? In the like manner all *positive acts* of vertue are but the natural effects of the interior habit. Where the love of God is seated in the Heart, 'twill operate in all the faculties, keep them in a busie endeavour of doing acceptable service: when *fear* is planted there, it will break forth in outward reverence and duty; and so proportionably 'twill be in every other instance. 'Tis therefore an advice well becoming the wisdom of *Solomon*, *Prov.* 4. *to keep the heart with all diligence*: but then it is withal the work of him who is greater than *Solomon* to teach us how to do this: for *unless he keep that City the watch-*

watchman waketh but in vain. If he inſtruct not to ſecure thoſe iſſues of life, they will betray & ruin, appear indeed *the ſavour of death unto death.* Now of this divine art of *Tactiks* and defence, Chriſtianity is the only School, and therefore moſt fitly qualified for the producing all thoſe ſupernatural excellencies, to which the timely prepoſſeſſion of the heart is the rudiment and principle.

AND as the *preceptive* part enjoyns the moſt exact and elevated vertue, ſo is it moſt advantageouſly enforc't by the *Promiſſory*, which both in reſpect of the kind and value of the rewards, and alſo the manner of propoſing them, is moſt exquiſitely adapted to the ſame end.

FOR firſt, if we conſider the nature of the things promiſed, we ſhall find they are not groſs and *carnal*, ſuch as may court and gratifie the beaſtial part of us; but ſuch as are proportioned to the ſupream and leading principle, as feaſt a *Soul*, and ſuit with the capacities of an *intelligence*. All the beatitudes the Goſpel tenders to its votaries, either relate to the *purity* or peace of the mind in this life; or elſe to its completer *felicity* hereafter. And though 'tis true, the body is not wholly unconſidered, though the addition of all temporal neceſſaries be promiſed, yet even thoſe are for the Souls ſake, either to ſecure it from the ſin of ſolicitude and diſtruſt, or to preſerve it a uſeful inſtrument for the others ſervice. And as for the future glory in which the body is to partake, 'tis to be obſerved, that fleſh & bloud cannot inherit it; that load of earth which now engages to corruption

tion must be put off, must be calcin'd and spiritualiz'd; and thus made glorious, be clothed upon with Glory. So that in all the Gospel dispensation, there is no *provision for the flesh*, its lusts and sensualities. And then sure there cannot be a more unanswerable argument against our providing for it, than to see it left out of Gods care. Indeed had we proposals of a *Mahumetan* Paradise, were we to expect our bliss only in the satiating our appetites, it might be reasonable here to whet them before-hand, to stretch them to the utmost wideness, or in the Prophets phrase, *to enlarge our desires as Hell*, and by frequent antepasts excite our gust for that profuse perpetual meal. Or were we only to have our portion in this life, to enjoy an uninterrupted affluence of outward comforts, 'twere but good husbandry to improve them to the height, and the Wise mans advice would then cease to be Eirony, *Eccles.* 11. 9. *Rejoyce O young man, and let thy heart chear thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and the sight of thine Eyes.* Had we only the prospect of a *Canaan*, such an eternal inheritance as a conquering Sword could give, as the salvation of a *Joshua*, and the affluence of milk & hony could produce. 'Twould be no wonder, if we never voluntarily endured the thirst and famine of the wilderness, but be always as they desiring meat for our lust, projecting the gratifying those desires in whose repletion we placed our happiness. But when our Religion makes us no such tender, when all its hopes are of another make, invite to those Diviner

joys of which ſenſuality has no capacity or taſte. What pretence can we have to cheriſh that *here*, which we muſt wholly be diveſted of *hereafter*, thoſe immaterial felicities we expect, do naturally ſuggeſt to us, the neceſſity of preparing our appetites, and hungers for them, without which Heaven can be no Heaven to us: for ſince the pleaſure of any thing reſults from the agreement between it and the deſire, what ſatisfaction can *Spiritual* enjoyments give unto a *Carnal* mind? Alas, what delight would it be to the Swine to be wrapt in fine Linnen, and laid in Odours: his ſenſes are not gratified by any ſuch delicacies, nor would he feel any thing beſides the torment of being with-held from the mire. And as little complacency would a brutiſh Soul find in thoſe purer and refin'd pleaſures, which can only upbraid, not ſatisfie him. So that could we by an impoſſible ſuppoſition phancy ſuch a one aſſumed to thoſe fruitions, his pleaſure ſure would be as little as his preparation for it was. Thoſe *eyes* which have continually beheld vanity, would be dazled, not delighted with the *Beatifick viſion*; neither could that *Tongue*, which has accuſtomed itſelf only to Oaths and Blaſphemies, find Harmony or Muſick in a *Hallelujah*. 'Tis the peculiar priviledge of the pure in heart, *that they ſhall ſee God*; and if any others could ſo invade this their encloſure, as to take Heaven by violence, it ſurely would be a very joyleſs poſſeſſion to theſe men, and only place them in a condition to which they have the greateſt averſation and Antipathy.

Antipathy. So that holiness here, is not only necessary to the acquiring, but the enjoyment of Bliss hereafter: and therefore unless men will contrive to annihilate their joys, and affect the monstrous riddle of being tormented in Heaven, they cannot but from this Spirituality of the promises, infer a necessity of purifying themselves, and being capable at least of innocent Celestial joys: and since that only can be done by vertuous practice here on Earth, the Obligation thereto must needs be very pressing and indispensable. And as the *nature* of the promises directs to this, so does the great transcendent *value* encourage and animate. *Hope* is the grand exciter of industry, and as the object of Hope is more or less *desirable*, so is the endeavour more *intense* or *remiss*; and upon this ground we must conclude the Christian has all reason to be the most indefatigable, seeing his expectations are the noblest and most encouraging. That they are so, we cannot but acknowledge, if we admit of the description which the *Spirit* gives: that *Spirit* which as he seals us to it, so is himself the earnest of that Inheritance. He in the Sacred *Scriptures* has drawn us a Map of the Countrey which we are to enter: And sure we may say of it as *Caleb* and *Joshua* did of *Canaan*, *Numb.* 14. 7. *the land is an exceeding good land.* For first, if we consider the Negative advantages it has, we shall find there is an absence of all the Ills, destructive or affrightful unto humane Nature. *There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain.*

Revel. 21. 4. Here alas, we are infeſted by all theſe. *Sorrow* and *Pain*, prey and inſult on all the comforts of our lives; leave us not a Gourd, which is not like that of *Jonah*, ſmitten with theſe Worms: and then comes *death*, the grand devourer, and ſpares not *life* itſelf. Nay, thoſe little *reſpites* which we have from theſe, are ſo embittered by unpleaſant expectations and Preſages, that we are ſad before we are *afflicted*: in *pain* without a *diſeaſe*, and in *death* in the midſt of *life*: and then a State exempted, not only from the Calamities but the Fears of theſe, may well deſerve to be lookt upon with appetite.

BUT Heaven is deſigned for our reward, as well as reſcue, and therefore is *adumbrated* by all thoſe *poſitive excellencies* which can endear or recommend. It is a *Crown*, and that not of *thorns*, ſuch as our *Saviours* was, and ſuch as the more affected *Diadems* of the world oft prove unto the wearer, *but one of Glory*: nor is that *Crown* nor that *Glory* like our *ſublunary* ſplendors, which ſuddenly vaniſh, and leave the poſſeſſors to the greater obſcurity and contempt; but 'tis *permanent*, ſuch *as fades not away*, 1 *Pet.* 5. 4. or in St. *Pauls* phraſe, *an eternal weight of Glory*. But to give you its more comprehenſive Character, *'tis a being with the Lord*, 1 *Theſſ.* 4. 17. Nay, 'tis a poſſeſſing even God himſelf. *He ſhall be their God*, *Rev.* 22. 3. and what can he want who poſſeſſes him who is all things? How can he fail of the moſt raviſhing delight, that ſtands before him *in whoſe preſence is the fulneſs of Joy*, and *at whoſe*

whose right hand are pleasures, and those not short or transient, *but for evermore*? So indefeisible is our estate in those *Joys*, that if we do not like mad prodigals sell it in reversion, we shall when we are once invested, be beyond the possibility of ill husbandry, not have it in our power to undo our selves. Now surely these are great and precious *promises*, such as may well sustain the weight of that inference the *Apostle* builds upon them; and engage us to *cleanse* our selves from all *filthiness* both of *flesh* and *spirit*, and *to perfect holiness in the fear of God*, 2 *Cor.* 7. 1. for they address to that *Principle* which is confestly Predominant in our *Nature*; so that if the love of *Christ* cannot, yet the love of our *selves* may constrain us. How must it then affront and baffle the enticements of sin, when we compare its empty vanishing *pleasures* with those solid and durable *joys*? What a forestalling will it be of Satans markets, that God bids so much fairer for us; offers us that to which his ταῦτα πάντα σοι δώσω, *all this will I give* (could he make such a whole-sale) can bear no proportion, and how then shall we ever barter it away for those little petty commodities he retails to us; or make any other reply to his profers, than a *get thee behind me Satan*? For alas! can we remember that we are *candidates* for a Kingdom, and yet retain the abject spirits of *slaves*? Do we expect to reign hereafter, and yet depose our selves before-hand here? Suffer every the vilest lust to rule over us? Is so glorious a prize annext to the victory, and will

it not animate the faintest heart, and feebleſt hands to the combate? What Lions can we fear in the way which this hope is not *Sampſon* enough to encounter? How *light* are our heavieſt, how *momentary* our moſt laſting Afflictions, if balanced with that *eternal weight of Glory?* Are we ſpoil'd of our goods, here is a reſerve of treaſure which no *Thief*, neither the ſlye, nor the avowed, the pilferer, nor the ſequeſtrator can invade. Are we reduced to our *Saviours* deſtitution, not to have *where to lay our head, yet we have a building of God, an houſe not made with hands eternal in the Heavens.* Are we reproacht for the name of *Chriſt*, that *Ignominy* ſerves but to advance our future *Glory*, every ſuch *Libel* here, becomes *Panegyrick* there. Nay, are we perſecuted to death, that ſends us but to take poſſeſſion of the Crown of Life. Upon ſuch ſure grounds does our Chriſtianity ſet us. While we make good its condition, it pulls out the ſting of all that is moſt deadly. And in a more comprehenſive ſenſe, poſſeſſes us of the priviledge promiſed the *Diſciples, that nothing ſhould by any means hurt them, Mar.* 16. The moſt adverſe chances being but like the ploughing and breaking the ground, in order to a more plentiful harveſt. And yet we are not ſo wholly turned off to that reverſion, as to have no ſupplies for the preſent; for beſides the comfort of ſo great and certain an expectation in another *life*, we have promiſes alſo for *this*. Even of all thoſe internal and ſpiritual ſatisfactions which attend the *practice of piety*. The feaſt of a good

Conſcience

Conſcience is the true *Chriſtians* daily diet, and ſure whatever the rich men of the world think, he only can be ſaid to fare deliciouſly: nay, he has yet more *ſupernatural* food, *Manna* rain'd down immediately from Heaven: the *Holy Spirit* ſent on purpoſe to refreſh and ſupport him: thoſe Joys which differ rather in degree than kind, from thoſe which are to be his final portion. And that the *Soul* may not be too much incommoded in her houſe of clay, there is proviſion made for that alſo, ſuch neceſſaries ſecured to the body, as may keep it in *Tenantable* repair: we have *Chriſts* expreſs promiſe for it, that *to thoſe that ſeek the Kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs, all theſe things ſhall be added*: if not that ſuperfluity which may oppreſs and load, (render the *body* rather the Tomb than Manſion of the *ſoul*) yet ſuch as may ſuſtain and ſupport us: and ſure 'tis eaſie to decide which is the happier lot. In ſhort, we are ſure enough to defray the charge of that voyage, which lands us at *Eternal Bliß*: And certainly he muſt be of a very ſluggiſh or querulous humour, that ſhall *demur* upon ſetting out, or demand higher encouragements.

AND as the *nature* and value of the *Promiſes* render them moſt proper engagements and incentives to all *vertue*; ſo if we conſider the *manner* of propoſing, we ſhall find them in that reſpect alſo highly contributive to the ſame end. For firſt, they are clear and expreſs, not wrapt up in dark *ænigmatical* inſinuations, wherein men muſt exerciſe their *ſagacity* aſwell as their *faith*: but

revealed with that plainneſs, that 'tis impoſſible for any who knows but the letter of the *Goſpel* to be ignorant of the Eternal rewards it propoſes. And herein the difference belongs to *Chriſtianity* above all other *Religions*, ſome whereof have left men ſo much in the dark, that many *Sects* among them have denied the immortality of the *Soul*, and ſure they were but faint encouragements they could propoſe unto that *vertue* which was to periſh with them. What ſhould animate them to the rugged ſevere taſtes of reſtraining appetites, ſubduing paſſions, eradicating habits who diſcerned no rewards for blameleſs *ſouls*. 'Tis true indeed *vertue* is in her ſelf perfectly amiable, though ſhe brought no dowry, but experience ſhews us ſhe has not many *Platonick* lovers: and when ſo few are ambitious to wed Her, when ſhe brings an Eternal inheritance with her, we may eaſily gueſs how little ſhe will be ſought without it. When men once conclude that their *Spirits* ſhall vaniſh into the ſoft Air; the inference is very obvious, *Come on, let us uſe the creatures as in youth*; as we find it elegantly purſued, *Wiſd.* 2. But of thoſe who acknowledged a future being, their perceptions were very miſty and obſcure. The *Heathens* had ſuch confus'd notions of their *Elyſium*, that the *Epithet* of *ſhades* belong'd more properly to the darkneſs than the refreſhment, & was a reward fit for the votaries of thoſe ambiguous *Oracles* they conſulted. And proportionably to the obſcurity of their hopes were the Exerciſes of their *vertue*: their *piety* was even overwhelmed

and

and confounded by the multitude of their *Deities*; nay, which is yet stranger, their *Gods* themselves seem to have been lost in their own croud: else sure the *Athenians* would never have inscrib'd an Altar to the unknown *God*: and indeed their offices were generally such, as if they had been devoted to no other, they having as little discerning of their *Worship* as of their *God*. 'Twas wrapt up in clouds and darkness; had mysterious recesses to which the common worshipper had no admittance; such as were to acquire a veneration only by not being understood: and though this must needs deprive their services of that spirit and quickness, which constitutes the *vertue* of devotion, yet alas, their *Religion* had more than that negative contrariety to *Vertue*. Many of their *worships* being nothing but a solemnity of the foulest *vices*: and their *Divinity* taught them to violate *Morality*. A deceit *Satan* could not probably so long have triumpht in, had they had the Gospel notion of Heaven, for sure they could not have suppos'd their *Gods* of such mutable inclinations, as to affect *purity* in their cohabitants, and *pollution* in their Votaries: or such incongruous dispensers of rewards, as to apportion an impeccable state hereafter to the most flagitious criminals on Earth.

As to the *Jews* 'tis true, they derived their light from a clearer Fountain, were under the *Oeconomy* of immediate Revelation, and therefore might be suppos'd to have had a freer prospect into that Heaven, from whence their *Law* descended,

ed, yet even they were in this, as in many other particulars, under *Moſes* his veil, had rather dark *adumbrations*, and thoſe too overwhelmed with the multitude of expreſs temporal promiſes. The earthly *Canaan* lay ſo fair and open to their proſpect, as eaſily intercepted their view of the *Heavenly*; and their *faith* muſt remove, at leaſt overlook, that *mountain* before it could come to any ſight of the *Horizon* and extended *Sky*. Nay, when 'tis remembred that the *Sadduces* a great and learned part of their Doctors denied all future being, we muſt think the intimations of it were very obſcure; it being ſcarce imaginable, that any conſidering men ſhould think the *Souls* expir'd with the *Body* upon any other ground, but that they knew not what after State to aſſign it. So that though they wanted not *figures* and *ſhadows*, or as the Apoſtle calls them, *patterns of Heavenly things*, *Heb.* 9. 23. yet they ſeem'd not to have been well underſtood, and the generality of men were not only in their Perſons, but their Underſtandings denied entrance into the *holy of holies*; penetrated not that myſtical repreſentation, which was within the Veil: And anſwerable to this dimneſs of their perceptions, was the whole *ſyſteme* and *body* of their *Religion*, which rather entertain'd itſelf in thoſe *external bodily* performances, which affected the *ſenſe*, than in thoſe *Divine* and *Spiritual* raptures, which purified and elevated the *Soul*. 'Tis the *Apoſtles* affirmation, *Heb.* 9. *that the ſacrifices there offered could not make him that did the ſervice perfect, as pertaining*

pertaining to the conscience, and he gives the reason in subjoyning, that they stood only in *meats and drinks*, and *carnal ordinances*. Alas what propriety had all their legal purifications towards the cleansing of the mind? That might be in the *Mire* while the body was in the *Laver*: and while the surface of the man was sprinkled with bloud, the heart might be more beastial than those creatures who lent the *ablution*. And indeed if we consider their morality, we shall find that outside formal ceremony had proceeded to infect and poison that also. The outward restraint, the bare forbearance of an actual commission, being by them thought a full compliance with all the Negative precepts: So that we see *Christ* is fain to assert the Internal part of the Obligation, and extend the duty to the thoughts and inclinations. Besides, those acts of *vertue* they perform'd were commonly such as had an Aspect, rather on their temporal well-being, than distant and unseen rewards their Justice, and Charity confin'd to their own *Nation*, directed to the flourishing of their own *Common-wealth*: whereas *Aliens* were devoted to their rapine and despight; so that if they were *vertues*, they were rather *Political* than *Moral*, and indeed while they placed so much of their hopes on *Earth*, lookt on *secular* plenty and tranquillity as their reward, 'twas but consonant they should square their endeavours by that measure, and consider things not simply in their native properties of good or ill, but according to their tendency towards that they esteem'd their *felicity*.

BUT

BUT God has provided, as the *Apoſtle* ſays, *Heb.* 11. 40. *better things for us*, has not only made a better Covenant with us, but has *eſtabliſht it upon better promiſes*, *Cap.* 8. 6. given us clearer revelations, not only of our *duty*, but our *recompence*; the veil in *Chriſt* is done away, and we all with open face, *Behold as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord*, 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. The Goſpel puts the evidences of our inheritance into our own hands, ſeal'd by his explicite and direct promiſe, who cannot lye: and that not only engag'd by way of *munificence*, but bargain and contract, as the purchaſe of that *price*, which our *Redeemer* fully paid in our behalf. And ſure this is in the *Apoſtles* phraſe *ſtrong conſolation*; and if ſo, it muſt be forcible enticement likewiſe, he cannot but run alacriouſly, who has the prize in his Eye; nor can S. *Paul* uſe a more preſſing argument to his *Corinthians*, *To be ſtedfaſt, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*, than this aſſurance, *That their labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor. 15. 58.

AND as this clear propoſal of the *promiſes* is moſt proper to encourage and inſpirit our endeavours, ſo is the conditionality moſt efficacious to neceſſitate and engage them. Had *Heaven* been only promis'd as a largeſs, and with a blind promiſcuous bounty diſpens'd without diſcrimination, how much it might have rais'd our *gratitude*, I know not, but ſure it would not have excited our *induſtry*, which in all inſtances we find is whetted by intereſt: and where that is

otherwiſe

otherwise secur'd, men generally estimate it a part of the benefit that their labour is superseded; and please themselves no less in a lazy bequest, than a full enjoyment. So that indeed it is this circumstance of the *promises* that must give life to all the rest, and make them operative toward the producing of *good life*; for admit the *joys* we expect never so *Divine* and *Spiritual* for their kind; never so great and transcendent for degree, and these also represented to us in the most clear and convincing manner, yet if they be tendered not as objects of our choice, but the certainty of our fate, *felicities* which we are only concerned to enjoy, but not to acquire, they may make us glad, but surely not diligent; it being but a cold inducement to any undertaking to be assur'd 'tis perfectly needless: We have therefore all reason to confess it our greatest advantage towards *vertue*, that God has so linkt our *hopes* and our *duty* together: and indeed when we consider the great disproportion between the one and the other; the infinity of the *reward*, with the despicableness of the *service*, we must resolve that he had no other design in making his *promises* conditional, than to engage us by our interest to that *holiness*, to which he saw our inclinations did not bind us: that it was an artifice of his *love* to ensnare us into two *felicities* by proposing of one, enforce us to take one good in the way to another, *vertue* in passage to *glory*.

AND indeed who would not think this method so invincibly efficacious, as might supersede the

the neceſſity of any other, but God who underſtands our thoughts, long before, *Pſal.* 139. 1. foreſaw, that notwithſtanding this propoſal of a *Canaan*, there would be *Rubenites* and *Gadites*, who would ſet up their reſt on this ſide of *Jordan*; ſo intent on the commodity of their Cattle, as to be content themſelves to be part of the Herd, and *become like the beaſts that periſh*: That there would be men of ſo ignoble, diſingenuous tempers, as none of theſe cords of a man would be able to draw; and therefore there is another part of the *Goſpel-Oeconomy* fitted to their capacities; the *threats* and *interminations*, thoſe terrors of the *Lord*, which as Goads may drive thoſe brutiſh Creatures who will not be attracted: that thoſe who think themſelves perfectly unconcern'd in *Davids* queſtion, *who ſhall aſcend unto the hill of the Lord*, *Pſal.* 24. 3. may yet ſtartle at *Eſays*, *who among us can dwell with everlaſting burnings?* Of ſo formidable a kind are thoſe menaces, as is ſufficient to awake the moſt drowſie ſtupid *Soul*, and are moſt apt to operate upon that part of their temper, which evacuated the gentler method: that very ſenſuality which made them deſpiſe *Heaven*, may help to enhanſe the dread of *Hell*; the lack of a *drop of water* will be moſt inſupportable to him who fared deliciouſly every day; thoſe *flames* will be yet more ſcorching to thoſe bodies, who by ſtudious effeminacies and ſoftneſs have ſuperadded an artificial tenderneſs to the natural; nor will the *gnawing of the worm* appear more intolerable to any, than thoſe who here

here make it their busineſs to tye up its *Jaws*, gag or ſtupifie that *Conſcience* which would now admoniſh, but will there torment. And when to this is added the *perpetuity* of theſe *pains*, that *the worm ſhall never die, the fire never be quencht*, certainly this puts ſuch an edge upon the terror, as may well make it in the *Apoſtles* phraſe, *quick* and *powerful, ſearching even to the dividing aſunder of the Soul and Spirit, the joynts and marrow.* When we are aſſur'd *that the Axe is thus laid unto the root of the tree, and that every tree that brings not forth good fruit muſt be hewn down and caſt into the fire*, we ſhall ſure be warn'd *to bring forth meet fruits of repentance, and fly from the wrath to come.*

BUT becauſe neither invitations nor threats can avail with thoſe who are any way invincibly impeded to apply them to their benefit: ſince the moſt *glorious prize*, the moſt formidable danger, is inſignificant to him, who wants power to run unto the one, or from the other; it has pleaſed God to inſpirit and actuate all his *Evangelical* methods, by a concurrence of *ſupernatural* ſtrength, makes it not only eligible but poſſible, I may ſay eaſie and pleaſant for us to do whatever he commands us: and notwithſtanding our natural debility, makes us through *Chriſt* which ſtrengthens us, *able to do all things*: by his Spirit he prevents, aſſiſts, reſtrains, excites, comforts, convinces; gives grace, and adds to that the happier largeſs of a will to uſe it, and knowledge to diſcern the want of more: infuſing to the *Soul* an ardent thirſt of greater powers, and readier means

of

of ſervice, which the performance actuates to greater ſtrengths, and yet enflames to new deſires, and more importunate purſuits, whileſt God at once beſtows and crowns his own donations; ſtill giving unto him that has, till that at laſt he gives himſelf; and *grace is ſwallowed up in glory*. And to aſſure us of this aid, he has been pleaſed to oblige himſelf; deſcends to the ſolemnity of a *Pact* and *Covenant*; has indented with us, and conſtituted it a principal part of the new and everlaſting *Covenant made with mankind in the blood of the Son of God, to ſend the comforter, his Holy Spirit, to be with us till the end of the world*, and do all this. So that the Goſpel is at once the aſſigner of our tasks, and the *Magazeen* of our ſtrength; ſo much Spirit goes along with that Letter; ſo much internal grace is annexed to its outward adminiſtration, as will to all, who do not reſiſt it, infallibly render it *the power of God to ſalvation*. For 'tis not the ſole priviledge of a S. *Paul*, but the common portion of all *Chriſtians*, *That Gods grace ſhall be ſufficient for them*; which is ſure a more Goſpel-like promiſe, than that it ſhould be too ſtrong for them: ſo violent and irreſiſtible as to commit a rape upon their *Spirits*; ſuch a mighty wind as drives them headlong upon *duty*. Indeed this competency is of all other proportions the moſt *incentive* to induſtry; we ſee in *Temporals*, too little makes men deſperate, and too much careleſs; and certainly 'twould be the ſame in *Spirituals*: but now when we have ſtock enough to ſet up with, and that too of ſo improvable

rable a nature, that is capable of infinite advancement, and yet on the other side no less capable of total decay also, it being given with this express condition, that upon neglect it shall be withdrawn: So that our own sloth may make us *poor*, but nothing else can keep us from being abundantly *rich*: What can be imagin'd more animating to diligence and endeavour? And this being the condition wherein our *Christianity* has placed us, added to the former considerations, will beyond exception or *subterfuge*, evince its perfect *aptitude* and *fitness* for the End to which it was aim'd, *the Planting and nourishing all true Vertue among men*, the introducing the tree of life into the world again, and so forming us a *Paradise* even amidst the briers and thorns of our Exil'd state.

CHAP. II.

The Character of Christian-mens Practice, shewing their multiplied failance both from the rule of that holy profession, and its genuine effect.

AND now who can suspect that a *cause* so rightly dispos'd, should miss of its *effect*? That this so *auspicious Planet* should be counter-influenc't by any *malevolent Star*? Or that what has so many tenures in us, should be finally dissei's'd? For, admit we have not the Piety

to be prevail'd upon by the reverence of the *Author*; yet the excellency of its *compoſition* does ſo much recommend it to our reaſon, that we muſt put off the beſt part of our *Nature* to evacuate the force of our Religion: Nay, ſuppoſing us to have done that too, to have ſtruck our ſelves out of the liſt of *Rationals*, yet if we keep but the rank of *Animals*, if we have not extinguiſht paſſion and ſenſe, it deſcends even to them; addreſſes to our hopes and fears with moſt importunate ſolicitations, and convincing motives: So that unleſs we have the abſurd ill luck to have much of the *Stoick*, and nothing of the *Philoſopher*, 'twill be impoſſible to reſiſt its impreſſions: And ſure he that contemplates *this*, will be apt with ſome confidence to conclude *Chriſtendom* to be the *Goſhen* of the world, not only in reſpect of its *light*, but of its *immunity* from all thoſe *Locuſts* and *Caterpillers*, thoſe ſwarms of mean and ſordid Vices which both cover and devour the reſt of the *Earth*.

BUT this muſt be the inference of a meer *contemplative*, a Recluſe that converſes only with his own meditations: For let him be ſo much *ſecular*, as once to look abroad, the moſt *tranſient* glance will ſerve to unravel all his hopeful *ſpeculation*, and ſhew him that *Chriſtendom* may be as much *Heathen* as *America*: Whereas 'tis uſually ſaid, that ill *Manners* produce good Laws, we have reverſt the *Aphoriſm*, and our good *Law* has introduc'd the moſt corrupt manners. Our holy *faith* which like a foundation ſhould *ſupport* good works,

works, has like a gulf *swallowed* them up. And so universal a depravation is there among us, that we have scarce any thing left to distinguish us from the most barbarous people, but a better name and worse vices.

AND here, what terms of wonder or of grief can be significant enough to express or to bewail, so strange and so perverse degeneration, that the *light* of the *world* should thus darken it; the *salt* of the *earth* be the means of putrifying and corrupting it: That those who were by God drawn out from the *Heathen* world should so outvie the *Gentiles* crimes, as if they had forsaken them, only because they were too *innocent*. *This* indeed is one of *Satans* subtillest stratagems, to fill Christ's *Camp* thus with his *Souldiers*, by whose intestine treacheries, he has been more *triumphant* than by all his open assaults and avowed hostilities. What a late *States-man* said (*Prophetically*, if we may judge by the event) of *England*, that *it was a vivacious animal that could never dye except it kill'd it self*, is no less true of the *Church*, which has always been *invulnerable* against all *darts*, but what have been taken out of its own *quiver*. Of *this* the *Primitive* times were *pregnant* testimonies, where all the most witty cruelties, the most bloudy persecutions, never made any breach in her: But she stood firmer for all those batteries, and like an Arch'd Building, became more strong and compact, by that weight which was design'd to crush her: But the *Vice* of *Professors* undermines her very founda-

tion, and does as much exceed the *deſtructiveneſs* of the moſt hoſtile aſſaults, as inteſtine *treachery* is more ruinous and fatal, than foreign *violence*.

AS long as the *lives* of Chriſtians were the *tranſcripts* of their doctrine they render'd it venerable to all, and gave a preſumption there was ſomething more than *humane* in it, that could work ſuch ſignal *effects*, that could ſo transform *men* as to make the *adulterer* chaſte, the *drunkard* temperate, the *covetous* liberal, the *contentious* peaceable. *This*, this was the way to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *Tit.* 2.10. And then the *rule of contraries* directs us to conclude very diſtant *effects* from our now ſo diſtant *practices*, that our very *religion* ſhould partake of the *infamy* of our lives, and be thought rather a *myſtery* of *iniquity* than *godlineſs*.

THUS is *Chriſt* wounded in the houſe of his *friends*, and has more *reproach* caſt on him by thoſe that *profeſs* his name, than by the loudeſt blaſphemies of thoſe that *oppoſe* it. For when thoſe who have not opportunity to examine our *faith*, ſee the enormouſneſs of our *works*, what ſhould hinder them from meaſuring the *Maſter* by the *diſciples*? It being ſcarce imaginable that any one *Sect* of men ſhould ſo univerſally run counter to all the rules of their profeſſion: For let any *ſober* Heathen look upon *Chriſtendom*, as it is at *this day* weltring in the bloud, not of *Martyrdom* but *War*, and will it be poſſible for him to

to think it owns a Gospel of *Peace*; or that those who so perpetually do those outrages they are unwilling to suffer, profess obedience to the *Royal Law* of *love thy neighbour as thy self*, *Jam.* 2. 8. Can he *see* the *violence* and oppressions, the *frauds* and underminings, the busie *scramblings* for little parcels of *Earth*; and yet believe we count our selves *strangers* and pilgrims in it, and have laid up our treasure in *Heaven*? Can he *observe* the strange and almost universal distortion of speech, whereby it has lost its native property of being *interpreter* of the mind, and under *intelligible* words so far exhibits the *Babel* confusion, that no man understands anothers meaning? And can he *imagine* we have any such *Precepts*, as *lye not one to another*, or any such *penalty* upon the infringer, as *exclusion from the new Jerusalem*? Shall he *hear* our *God* mention'd more frequently and earnestly in our *imprecations* than our *prayers*, and every part of our crucified *Saviour*, recrucified in our horrid *oaths*; And shall he not *think* that his *second* executioners bear him as little reverence as his *first*; Or that *he* has given no such *command* as *swear not at all*? When he discerns *self preservation* bow'd to as the *Supreme Law*; Can he ever *dream* of another so inconsistent *obligation* as that of *taking up the cross*? Or that *suffering for righteousness-sake* is one of our greatest *felicities*, when he sees us run so affrighted from it, that no crime, perjury, rebellion, murder, is block enough in our way to stop our flight? In *fine*, when he considers how

much of our buſineſs it is, firſt to excite, and then to cloy the fleſh, to ſpur it on to riots even beyond its own propenſions, that the whole year is but one mad carnival, and we are *voluptuous* not ſo much upon *deſire* or appetite, as by way of *exploit* and bravery: When I ſay he conſiders this, can he poſſibly gueſs our *inſtitution* directs us to beat down the body, to *mortifie the fleſh with the affections and luſts*, interdicts us all *rioting and drunkenneſs, chambering and wantonneſs*, and *all proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof.* Certainly all rules of diſcourſe will direct him to the quite contrary concluſion. And when he ſees a Set of men that have enhans'd the common humane pravity, he will be apt to infer their Principles have taught them the improvement: And upon that ſuppoſal he wanted not temptation to his Option that ſaid, *Let my ſoul be with the Philoſophers.*

AND while we thus miſrepreſent our holy profeſſion to *others*, it will be no wonder if we finally do it to *our ſelves*, that we forget its *native ſhape*, and look on her only in the *ugly dreſs* our ſelves have put on, and that effect ſeems already too viſible among us: Our lives have ſo long confuted it that we triumph over it as a baffled thing; and like *Ammon* loath it becauſe we have raviſht and defil'd it. Many of us take notice of the better Morals of *Turks* and *Infidels* not in reproach of our ſelves but our Religion, and becauſe we have ſo many *Lepers*, think *Abanah* and *Pharphar*, better than all the waters of *Iſrael*, this

this is openly in the *mouths* of many, but is ſo prodigiouſly *irrational* as well as *unjuſt*, that one can ſcarce think it poſſible to be in their *hearts*, unleſs they be purſued by the fate of habitual lyars, that at laſt come to perſwade themſelves.

CERTAINLY there is no other parallel inſtance wherein men conclude ſo perverſly: He that ſhews a man that precipice upon whoſe brink he ſtands, that intreats, yea importunes him to retire from the *danger*; nay bribes him with the greateſt rewards to chuſe *ſafety*, has done all that can be expected from a friend, or charitable man: And if after all, the wretched perſon ſo advis'd, ſhall caſt himſelf headlong upon ruine; aſſuredly no *Inqueſt* would return his murder in any other *form* than that of *Felo de ſe*. And why then ſhould our Chriſtianity be accus'd of thoſe ills which it would infallibly aver, if our obſtinacy would permit it: Indeed the charge is ſo wild, that it ſeems rather deſign'd as an artifice of diverſion, a ſprout of that firſt fig-tree which was to hide the nakedneſs of lapſed *Adam*. Men think it policy to transfer their guilts, and are willing, the *violence* of their luſts ſhould paſs for the *impotence* of their Religion. Like irregular *patients* blaming their *Phyſician* for thoſe ill accidents which they know owing only to their own unrulineſs. A pregnant teſtimony of the reproachful nature of ſin, that men are content to betake themſelves to the moſt forlorn ſhifts to avoid the owning it: But the

conſciouſneſs is ſo preſſing and intolerable, that with many it drives on to yet higher outrages: 'tis not enough for men to decry their *Chriſtianity* as a feeble *inſignificant* thing, but they load it even with contradictory *imputations*, and that which ſometimes they call *the fooliſhneſs of preaching*, to bring it in ſcorn and contempt, ſhall at another be ſtyled an *Art* and *trick* to bring it into ſuſpicion and hatred, be arraign'd for impoſture and deceit, a project of impoſing upon credulous ſouls, and gaining real advantages to the managers while they feed the ſilly *Proſelyte* with imaginary ones. How groundleſs a calumny this is, as it appears from the ſanctity, and eminent ſimplicity of Chriſtian Religion, which above all things excludes fraud and falſhood; ſo alſo from the deſignments and aims of its firſt promulgators, who as they cannot be ſuppos'd dextrous enough to lay ſuch a ſcene of taking Pageantry; ſo all their viſible acqueſts were ſcourgings and impriſonments, perſecutions and death. If this were the caſe, it would indeed go near to reconcile the before mention'd contradictory *imputations*, whileſt the impoſing upon credulous ſouls at this dear rate, would be in very deed *the fooliſhneſs of Preaching*, the greateſt madneſs in the world. Men of common reaſon would be aſham'd to uſe ſuch frivolous cavils: but who can without horror hear them from profeſt Chriſtians? That while *Infidels* are modeſt in their reproaches, look upon our Doctrine only as erroneous, *Diſciples* ſhould be bitter and charge it as inſidious and trea-

treacherous. Thus does the *Church* experiment the truth of her blessed *Lords Predictions*, and finds her *foes are those of her own house*: And though she be Christs *Dove*, yet is subjected to the fate of the *Viper*, and has her bowels torn out by those that spring from them.

THESE are the growing consequences of *resolute impiety*, he who will not be kept within the bounds of *duty*, seldom contents himself with that bare violation: He not only *breaks the bonds in sunder*, but *casts them away* too; is impatient they should keep a reputation to upbraid him, when he has robb'd them of the power of restraining him: And *this* sure is the bottom of all that deep reasoning, by which men have learnt to argue themselves and others out of their *Creed*: And though this be indeed the great *Arcanum* the *Philosophers stone* they aim at; yet they have met with another good experiment by the way: And have, by I know not what *Chimistry*, extracted a reputation out of these most unapt *materials*. He passes for a considering man that disputes principles, and is thought most to own his *reason* that least owns his *faith*: And then 'twill be no wonder if this success animate, and give them not only confidence, but vanity to avow what is thus creditable.

INDEED Satan is too subtle a manager to lose this advantage, and the event sadly shews, he has not neglected to improve it, as appears not only by the number of such pretenders unto reason, but even by their advancing to higher degrees.

The

The *voluptuary* who *likes* his portion in this world, and *fears* that in another, is at first only prompted by his interest to quarrel the *last Articles* of the *Creed*, and so in his own defence denies the *life everlasting*: But when he finds his necessity made a vertue, and himself struck into the repute of a wit; upon that account he doubts not, his fame will encrease with his irreligion, and so proceeds still to unravel farther, till at last he leaves not so much as *I believe in God*: That many have advanc'd so far is too evident, and by some so own'd, that they will not thank his charity, that shall hope better of them.

'TWAS once the *triumph* of infant Christianity, that it silenc'd all the *Heathen Oracles*, and within a while demolish'd even the *Synagogue* too: But alas, its mature age gives us that effect in a most inverted sense, it now has serv'd to suppress even the common notions of a *Deity*, turn'd out the *one* as well as the *many* Gods, and instead of *Polytheists* and *Idolaters* has made *Atheists*, and *that* which Christ tells us was design'd *to perfect and fill up the Law*, has by the strange pravity of its professors at once obliterated both *Law* and *Law-giver* out of mens minds, thereby exemplifying the old *Axiom*, *Corruptio optimi est pessima*; and the Saint as well as the *Angel*, if he desert his innocence, commences Fiend and *Devil*. These are such sad, such direful transmutations as excite not so much wonder, as grief and lamentation; and what

what Rivers, what Oceans of Tears are competent to bewail such unutterable evils.

THE removal of the *Candlestick* is so formidable a *judgement*, that the threatning of it, is us'd by Christ as the most awaking menace to the Seven Churches, *Revel.* 2. 3. but the removing it by our own hands is yet an enhansement of that highest calamity; when men are come to such an insensate obduration, that they court their *Plagues*, become their own *Lictors*, and make that their *choice* which is their extremest *punishment*, they are certainly too secure of that ruine they call for: And may we not fear it may prove *general*, and involve us all: That while so *many* cry out to be deliver'd from their Christianity as their load and pressure, and so *few* express their dissent to that demand: God may in judgment grant it, hearken to those that cry loudest, rescue his Gospel from our profane and impious violations, and give it to others that may bring forth the fruits of it.

NOR is this to be fear'd only from the *explicite* importunities of the blasphemous, for it is interpretatively the vote of many others; whoever give themselves up to the dominion of any lust, do *implicitly* renounce their obedience to Christ, and say *we will not have this man to rule over us.* And when he is thus depos'd from his *regal* and directive power, we have reason to believe he will despise a meer *titular* soveraignty, not suffer the Scepter of his Word to remain as an Empty *Ceremony* among those, who pay it no real

real obedience: Nor be again cloath'd with Purple, crown'd, and ſaluted King to advance the triumph of his ſcorn and crucifixion.

NOR will the fawning Profeſſions of the demure hypocrite *avert*, but *accelerate* this Fate: He that makes the *Golden Scepter* in Chriſts hand, a *rod of iron* in his own, that thinks his *Saintſhip* licenſes him to all the ſevere cenſures, and the yet ſeverer (becauſe more effective) *oppreſſions* of others, he is certainly to be lookt on not only as a Rebel, but an Uſurper too, and is of all others the higheſt provoker. He that *tramples* under foot the Son of God, does not ſo much violate him, as he that *pretends* to erect him a Throne upon bloud and rapine, on perjury and ſacriledge: Nor does he that accounts the Bloud of the *Covenant* an *unholy* thing ſo much profane it, as he that uſes it as a *Varniſh* to paint over his fouleſt luſts. The Apoſtle has long ſince told us, *there is no concord between Chriſt and Belial*, and can we think he will be patient thus to be made ſubſervient to his enemy: Or ſuffer his *Ark* to be ſet for the *ſupport*, which ſhould be the *confuſion* of *Dagon*. Do we find him ſo ſeverely upbraid the hypocriſie of the *Jews*, that *ſtole, murdered, committed adultery, and ſwore falſly, and yet came and ſtood before him in his houſe*, *Jer.* 7. 9. and ſhall we hope he will connive at it in Chriſtians? Was it intolerable profanation in them to *account* his houſe a den of robbers, and ſhall we be permitted to *make* it ſo? They are ſent to *Shiloh* to read their own

own deſtiny, and ſurely we are as likely to find ours there too; to be deprived of thoſe advantages which we have ſo unworthily abus'd: Nor can we expect, that though God cauſe the natural *Sun to riſe ſtill as well on the evil as the good*, yet that the *Sun of righteouſneſs* ſhall continue to ſhine on thoſe who will only bask themſelves in his Rays, grow *Æthiops* from his *neighbourhood*; but will not work by his *light*.

WHEN all this is conſider'd, what a ſad abode does it make? When the *blaſphemies* of the Profane, the *ſenſualities* of the Voluptuous, and the *mockeries* of the Hypocrite, ſend, as it were, daily challenges to Heaven, we cannot but look it ſhould at laſt *overcome* its long-ſuffering, *awake* God to vindicate the honour of his Name, and not ſuffer it any longer to be thus proſtituted and polluted: that when he ſees his light ſerve only to aid us the more ſubtilly to contrive our deeds of darkneſs, he ſhould withdraw it, ſmite us with blindneſs like the *Sodomites*, whom he finds in ſuch impure purſuits: And were that *blindneſs* ſuch as our Saviour ſpeaks of, *Jo.* 9. 41. that inferr'd the *no ſin*, 'twere a deſirable infliction, but alas, it has none of that property: That which is deſign'd for the puniſhment can never be the extenuation of our guilt; but as in Hell there is an happy Separation of *effects*, the ſcorching of the *flame* without the light, and the blackneſs of *night* without the reſt: So in this neareſt approach to it; this Portal to thoſe Chambers of death, there is the ignorance without the excuſe, the

the darkneſs diveſted of its native quality of hiding: And when we are enter'd among *Heathens* here, we muſt yet expect the ſadder portion of *Apoſtatiz'd* Chriſtians hereafter.

AND O that this *conſideration* might at laſt have its proper *operation*, rouſe and awake us timely to prevent thoſe evils which it will be impoſſible to cure. That by bringing forth ſome more *genuine* and kindly fruits, we may avert that *diſmal* ſentence, *Cut it down, why cumbreth it the ground* That men would generally lay to heart both the *ſin* and infamy of being *promoters of publick ruine*; and quench that *fire* with their tears which their ſins have kindled, that the faſting and prayers, the ſighs and groans of the *Primitive* Chriſtians may ſupplant the profane luxuries, the carnal Jollities of the *Modern*. And that Sackcloth and Aſhes may become the *univerſal mode*, the only *faſhionable* dreſs among us. *This* both Reaſon and Religion ſuggeſt as matter of our moſt importunate wiſhes; would God our hopes were but half as pregnant.

BUT the *leſs appearance* there is of this univerſal reformation, the *more jealouſly* ought every ſingle perſon to look on himſelf, leſt he be one that obſtruct it: For ſo he does who ſtays till it be a *faſhion*, but neglects to contribute his part to the making it ſo. Men are willing to diſcourage themſelves from attempts of this kind, and with an unſeaſonable modeſty can reflect what a nothing one man is to ſo many millions, when alas, all that vaſt Empire Vice has got in the world,

world, is founded in the pravity of single persons, and would certainly be ruin'd by their reformation. The more reasonable Collection would be, that he that considers himself but as *one*, should not suffer himself to grow into *less*; to fall from that *Unit* to a *Cypher*, by permitting sloth or cowardize to enfeeble and Emasculate him, but on the contrary should recollect his spirits, actuate all his strength, and therefore be sure to do his utmost, because that *utmost* is but a *little*.

AND to this certainly there want not encouragements, we see in common affairs the wonders that industry and resolution are able to effect, and a *single* courage being exerted has often without *Romance*, overcome *giantly* difficulties. 'Tis a great prejudice is cast upon vertue by the pusillanimity of those that *like*, but dare not *abet* her. When most men commit all impieties daringly, and openly, and those few that do mourn for it, do it but in secret, the example of the *one* is contagious, but the *other* has no means to diffuse itself. Would men stoutly own *duty*, and not like *Peter*, *follow Christ afar off*, they might yet hope to make a party and *gain ground* in the world. And how noble an attempt were this, thus to encounter Satan in his highest triumph, and recover a *lost field*: And methinks those who have any *warmth* of Piety glowing within, may easily thus improve it into a *flame*, ἐπιχορηγήσατε ἐν τῇ πίστει τὴν ἀρετὴν, *add to their faith vertue*, as that signifies *courage*: And then readily would succeed that train of Christian excellencies reckon'd up by St.

St. *Peter*, 2 *Ep.* 1. 5. *knowledge, temperance, patience, godlineſs*, and ſuperſtruct on theſe, as it there follows, *brotherly kindneſs*, and the moſt comprehenſive *charity*. We ſhould be not only devout towards *God*, but zealous towards *Men*, endeavouring by all prudent means to recover them out of thoſe ſnares of the Devil, whereby they are taken captive. And ſince among all thoſe ſnares there is none more entangling, than the creditableneſs and repute of cuſtomary vices, to ſet themſelves eſpecially againſt that overgrown covering and ornament; thoſe *Locks* wherein its great, its *Sampſon-like ſtrength* lies: And ſtrive to render it as contemn'd as it is baſe: And to this purpoſe nothing is ſo apt, as the exalting its competitor, fetching vertue out of the Dungeon, that darkneſs and obſcurity wherein it has long lain forgotten, and by making it illuſtriouſly viſible in their *own* practice, put it into the poſſibility of attracting *others*. Indeed there only it appears in its true ſplendour, they are but dead colours the Sublimeſt ſpeculation can put on it, he that would draw it to the life, muſt imprint it upon his own. And thus every pious perſon may, nay ought to be a *Noah*, a preacher of righteouſneſs: And if it be his fortune to have as imperſwaſible an Auditory, if he cannot avert the *deluge*, it will yet be the providing himſelf an *Ark*, the delivering, yea advancing his *own ſoul*, if he cannot benefit *other mens*.

NAY, this being a *Noah* may qualifie him to be a *Moſes* too, give him ſuch an *intereſt* with Heaven,

Heaven, that he may be fit to stand in the gap, to be an *intercessor* and Mediator for a provoking people. And God knows never any generation more needed that *office*: nor any part of this more than our sinful Nation, which having long been in the *furnace*, is indeed now come out, but so unpurified, that we have all reason to expect a return, and that not upon the former frustrated design of *refining*; but upon that more infallible and fatal one of *consuming* us. 'This is so dreadful, but withall so just an expectation, that if there be any *Jacobs* among us; any, *who can wrestle and prevail with God*, there never was so pressing need of their intercession. O let all that are thus fitted for it, vigorously undertake this pious work; let no *Moses*'s hands ever wax heavy, but be always held up in a devout importunity; let them transcribe that holy Oratory, which he so often effectually used, plead to God his own cause, with a *What wilt thou do to thy great Name?* And when there is nothing in us that can pretend to any thing but vengeance, ransack Gods *bosom*, rifle his *bowels* for arguments of *compassion*, repeat to him his own *titles*, that he is *long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin*, *Numb.* 14. 18. And by these solicite, yea, conjure him to pity. And how great an ardency is required to this intercession? What *strong* cries must they be that shall drown so *loud* a clamor of impieties? And how does it reproach the slightness of our sleepy heartless addresses? Can we hope to bind Gods hands

with Withs and Straws? To arreſt his vengeance with ſuch faint and feeble aſſaults? And when *nature* and *danger* ſuggeſt to Heathen *Nineveh*, not *only* to cry, but cry *mightily* to God, ſhall the ſuperaddition of our Religion damp ours into a *whiſper*, a ſoft *unaudible* ſound? A ſtorm will teach the profane Mariner to pray in earneſt, and alas! we have not wanted that diſcipline. 'Tis not long ſince we might have ſaid with thoſe, *Acts* 27. *No ſmall tempeſt has long lain on us, neither Sun nor Stars in many days*, nay in many *years appearing*, nothing but black and diſmal portents of a final *wreck* to a poor *weather-beaten Church*, and then ſure 'twas time to be importunate, to learn ſo much of inſtruction from the waves that toſſed us, as to make our prayers keep pace with them, in ſwift uninterrupted ſucceſſion, in loud and not to be reſiſted violence. That we did ſo *then* I dare not affirm, but ſure I am the neceſſity of it is not *yet* out-dated; for though the Sky however black with clouds carry no thunder in it; though the impetuous winds that blow from every quarter, ſhould not break out in tempeſt, and bring ſhipwrack to us; yet we too fully exemplifie the truth of the *Prophets* Axiome, *That the wicked are like the troubled Sea, that cannot reſt*: we have *within* us a principle of ruine, which can operate though nothing from *without* excite it. A tempeſt is not always neceſſary to ſink a Ship, one treacherous leak may do it in the greateſt calm, and what ſecurity can there then be to our torn Veſſel, whoſe rents our continued diviſions do

do still keep open. Indeed our *preservation* must be as our *restauration* was, the work of Omnipotence; thither therefore let us address with St. *Peters* pathetick Prayer, *Save, Lord, or we perish.* O that all who are concern'd in the grant of that Petition, would qualifie themselves to present it; lift up such pure hands, *that God who hears not sinners, Joh. 9.* may yet hear them, afford a gracious ear, and give an answer of *Peace.*

CHAP. III.

A Survey of the Mischiefs arising from Inconsideration.

THE last Section having defeated all the promising hopes of the former, by shewing us how sadly we have frustrated all the designs and engagements of our profession; enervated all those apt and powerful methods, and how perfectly contrary our *practices* are to our *rules*, meer curiosity would more prompt us to enquire what are the hidden *causes* of those so strange *effects*; what unhappy propriety there is in the *soil*, that after so much *culture* and husbandry it should produce nothing but *wild* Grapes; and by what arts and wiles Satan has not only evaded, but even retorted those blows which were aim'd at him. But as in *diseases* the *pains* and

languiſhings are obvious to the groſſeſt ſenſe, but the *ſprings* and originals of them moſt frequently lye deep, and are ſo complicated and interwoven, that they require much art to ſearch and to diſtinguiſh them: nay, do often mock the moſt ſubtile inquiſitor, and ſend him back with meer conjectures and uncertain gueſſes: ſo in this *Epidemick* Spiritual diſtemper, the *malady* is notorious and viſible, but the *cauſes* of it not ſo eaſily determin'd, yet that not ſo much from the darkneſs as the number of them; ſo many do pretend, and that with very good colour, to this unhappy, this monſtrous birth, that a *Solomon* himſelf muſt have made the propoſal of dividing it, as not being able to have aſſign'd it entire to any one Mother.

INDEED ſo many are the concurrents towards it, that it would far exceed the limits of this little Tract, but to point at them: I ſhall not therefore undertake any ſuch *exact* enumeration, but ſhall only take notice of thoſe which either for the generality or degree of their efficacy appear the moſt *eminent*.

AND firſt the great and ſtupid *Inconſideration* which moſt men have concerning their Religion, may well paſs for a main cauſe of its fruſtration. *Chriſtianity* may make *Archimedes* his *challenge*; give it but where it may ſet its foot; allow but a ſober advertence to its propoſals, and it will move the whole *world*: it comes with moſt invincible and controuling arguments, but ſtill they are arguments, and thoſe muſt firſt obtain

attention,

attention, before they can force *aſſent*; they will moſt infallibly weigh down the *ſcales*, though the whole world were the *counter-balance*; but then that muſt preſuppoſe their being put into thoſe Scales; their being entertain'd with ſo much of deliberation, as may try and examine their weight. In a word, they addreſs to us as men, that is, *creatures* endued by God with *rational* Souls and diſcurſive faculties; but if we will ſuppreſs theſe, and ſet up only the *brute* to give audience, we muſt not expect *Balaams* prodigy ſhall be every day repeated, that the *beaſt* ſhould be wiſer than the *rider*, and conſequently cannot wonder if the Succeſs vary with the Auditors.

AND 'tis to be fear'd, this is the ſtate of moſt of us, that all the convincing *Logick*, that *demonſtration of the Spirit*, as St. *Paul* calls it, and all the perſwaſive *Rhetorick* of the Goſpel, find us ſo ſtupid and unconcern'd, that they can make no impreſſion: all the *avenues* are ſo blockt up, that they can find no way of approaching us. We are like the *Indian* Serpents *Philoſtratus* mentions, proof againſt all charms, but ſuch as with their glittering ſplendor aſſault our Eyes: nothing moves us but what courts our Senſes, and what is not *groſs enough* to be ſeen, we think *too nice* to be conſider'd. The form and name of Chriſtianity men find ready to their hands, and it coſts them no labour to put it on: but ſhould they be interrogated of the import and ſignificancy of it, I fear many would be at a loſs what to anſwer. Men call themſelves *Chriſtians*

as they do *French* or *Engliſh*, only becauſe they were born within ſuch a Territory, take up their *Religion* as a part of their *fate*, the temper of their *Climate*, the entail of their *Anceſtors*, or any thing moſt remote from their choice; the profeſſion of it deſcends to them by way of inheritance, and like young careleſs Heirs, they never are at the charge to ſurvey it, to inform themſelves either of the Iſſues, or Revenues of it; what burdens it lays, or what advantages it promiſes. Every man ſees they are vaſt multitudes that have entered the *Baptiſmal* vow, and I fear no ſmall numbers of them, that weigh it as little when they ſhould *perform* it, as they did when they *made* it. Have no other notion of *Baptiſm*, but as a *cuſtom* of the place, or a *time* of feſtivity: conſider no farther ſignificancy in theſe ſpiritual bands, than they do in the Swadling-cloaths of their infancy, and can give no better account why they took on them *Chriſts livery*, than why they wear ſuch *garments* as the *common faſhion* of their Country preſcribes them.

THIS is in many the effect of groſs ignorance, that really know nothing that borders upon Religion: and where that is the *principle*, we cannot think it ſtrange to ſee their *practices* proportionable; this returns them into the ſtate of *Heatheniſm*, and while they walk in that darkneſs, it is no wonder if they often fall: the only matter of admiration is, that there ſhould be any ſuch darkneſs among us; that *the glorious light*, as St. *Paul* terms it, *of the Goſpel of Chriſt*, ſhould

not

not long ere this have diſpell'd it out of our *Horizon*, and certainly, that it has not, muſt be owing to ſome very great guilt, ſo that concerning ſuch perſons the Diſciples queſtion, *Joh.* 9. is very pertinent, *Who did ſin, this man or his Parents?* Where men are ſo ignorant, it muſt neceſſarily infer their *Parents* negligence in infuſing, or their *own* ſtubborn perverſeneſs in reſiſting inſtruction; but 'tis more probable to conclude the former, ſince if Children were early inſtituted, knowledge would inſenſibly inſinuate itſelf, before their years had arm'd them with obſtinacy enough to make head againſt it: but when by the Parents remiſſneſs the proper Seeds-time is loſt, the ſoil grows ſtiff and untractable; the *labour* of learning averts their Childhood, and the *ſhame* of it their Manhood, and ſo they grow old in their ignorance, are ready to *leave* this world before they come to *know* any thing of that which is to ſucceed it. This is a *common*, but certainly, a moſt *deplorable* caſe; and as it loudly accuſes thoſe Parents, who thus wretchedly hazard their Childrens greateſt concernments, ſo certainly it reflects not very laudably upon thoſe, who by ſlighting that excellent Order of *Confirmation* in this Church, have beſides all other advantages of it, robb'd them of that happy reſerve, which the care of their *Spiritual* Parent had provided to repair the negligence of their *Natural*; but guilt has a miſerable kind of infinity, and leſſens not by being communicated; and therefore though theſe unknowing perſons may with juſtice enough

accuſe others, yet can they never the more *abſolve* themſelves. Indeed they cannot tax others omiſſions towards them, without a tacit reproach of their own: for if it were a fault in the *Parent*, to let their infancy want thoſe neceſſary infuſions, 'tis ſurely ſo in *themſelves*, to let their riper years continue in that deſtitution. And ſure 'tis not probable there could be a more irrational motive to the *former*, than that which prevails with the *later*; to wit, the fear of ſhame, which certainly much more properly belongs to him that lies ſtupidly under his want, than he that induſtriouſly ſets to cure it: ſo that while they go thus prepoſterouſly to *avert* reproach, they invite it; nay, and do beſides betray one of their moſt important ſecrets, diſcover themſelves more ſolicitous about *appearances* than *realities*; to be *thought* knowing than to *be* ſo. A ſtrange kind of *ſpeculative* Hypocriſie, which yet leads to all the *practical* profaneneſs incident to thoſe, *who live without God in the world*.

BUT would God the unchatechiz'd were the only perſons we had to complain of in this matter: There is another ſort as *ignorant*, who have not that plea; who by a wretchleſs *Inconſideration*, have made a ſhift to *unlearn* what they had once been *taught*. That this is naturally very poſſible no man can queſtion, that obſerves how *deſuetude* will rob a man of any Science, or other habit. But in this caſe there is yet a farther concurrent towards it; Chriſts parable tells us of *Fowles that devoured the Seed*, which himſelf interprets to be

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the *wicked one*, which catcheth away the word ſow'n in mens hearts: When that ſpiritual ſeed lies looſe and ſcatter'd upon the ſurface, and is not by deep and ſerious meditation harrowed, as it were, into the ground, it offers itſelf a ready prey to the devourer, and God knows the *event* is too ready to atteſt the *truth* of the obſervation: For do we not ſee *many* whoſe childhoods have wanted nothing of Chriſtian nurture, that have had all advantages to the making them *wiſe unto ſalvation*, yet ſuffer their manhood to wear out and obliterate all thoſe *rudiments* of their youth; and that not only out of their *practice*, but even out of their *memory* too: this (would we be patient to have the experiment made) would, I doubt not, be found too true in divers, and they would appear leſs able to approve themſelves, not only to the *Confeſſor*, but even to the *Catechiſt* in their *adult age*, than they were in their *Minority*; as having ſcarce ever thought of the principles of their religion, ſince they conn'd them to avoid correction; and then 'tis no wonder if they paſs into the ſame *forgetfulneſs* with other the occurrences of that *ſlippery* age.

BUT if with ſome the *memory* have been ſo invincibly *faithful*, as not to have reſign'd its *depoſitum*; if it do happen obſtinately to retain thoſe early impreſſions which were made on it; yet alas! that alone will be of little avail: 'tis true that is the ſtore-houſe, and 'tis good to have that well repleniſht; but if its *plenty* be only within itſelf, uncommunicated; if the *gra-*

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nary, though never ſo full, be ſeal'd up, it gives no ſecurity againſt a *famine*: a mans remembrance of his *Creed* may tell him there is a *God*, and that he is Almighty; but if his reaſon be ſo much aſleep, as not to infer from thence the neceſſity of reverencing and obeying him who is all powerful to revenge our contempts, he may repeat the *Article* every day, and yet nevertheleſs *Atheiſtically*. In like manner he may go on to the Birth, Death, and Reſurrection of Chriſt; but if he weigh not the obligations to gratitude and duty, which devolve on him from thence, he may remember his *Birth*, and yet never be *regenerate*: his *Death*, and yet not *dye to ſin*: and his *Reſurrection*, and yet *lie rotting* in his own *corruption*, and not riſe with him to *newneſs of life*. So he may proceed to his *coming to Judge the quick and the dead*; but if he reflect not on his own particular concernment in it; if he conſider not that *for every the ſecreteſt thing*, Eccl. 11. *God will bring him*, as well as others, *to judgment*; he may talk of *Dooms-day* as men do of ſuch *Aſſizes* as they have no Trial at, but it will never ſet him a trembling, or give him the providence to anticipate his ſentence; ſo judge himſelf here, that he may not be judged of the Lord. And ſo proportionably in all tho parts of our Chriſtian Faith: he that does not extract from them their proper and juſt inferences, ſhall never feel their efficacy. He has indeed in that excellent *Syſteme*, a moſt infallible *Catholicon*, againſt all his ſpiritual Maladies; but 'tis a Medicine, not a Charm;

Charm; to be taken, not laid by him; and if he fail in *application*, he will as certainly miſs of the *cure*: And this gives us one too clear a reaſon, why *ſo many*, in the moſt fatal ſenſe, *are ſick and weak among us, and ſaln aſleep*; are firſt *lethargick*, and then ſtark *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*. Men do not by ſober conſideration ſuck out the vertue which would heal them: they look on the Creed as *Chriſts badge*, and ſo long as they bear that, they think none muſt queſtion their *Chriſtianity*: whereas 'tis indeed more properly his Military *Symbolum*, or recognition of the Cauſe, and General they fight for; an engaging them to all the obedience, fidelity and conſtancy of reſolute ſouldiers: and to this purpoſe it is that we *ſtand up* at the recital of the Creed, as owning our Baptiſmal promiſe, to *fight* manfully under our Saviours *Banner* againſt *Sin*, the *World*, and the *Devil*; and if we do not thus, 'tis not material what profeſſions we make, we are the ſame deſertors whether we *ſtay* in our own Camp, or *run* over to the enemies; *throw away* our Arms, or *not uſe* them; *renounce* our Chriſtian faith, or not *improve* it. Sloth is as miſchievous in war as treachery or cowardize, and he that keeps his *ſword* in the *ſheath*, is as unformidable an enemy, as he that brings *none* into the *field*.

AND how many ſuch inſignificant *combatants* are there in the Chriſtian Camp, that only lend their *Names* to fill up the *Muſter-roll*, but never dream of going upon *ſervice*? 'Tis certain

certain there are as many ſuch, as there are careleſs unconſidering Profeſſors: and theſe, 'tis to be fear'd, make ſo great a number, that were the Church put to eſtimate her *forces*, and examine what effectively her *ſtrength* is, ſhe would find the deceit of *falſe muſters* as great among the *Spiritual* as the *Civil* Souldiery. It is indeed a moſt amazing thing to ſee, that that which is the one great and important intereſt of all men, ſhould of all other things meet with the leaſt regard. If we make a propoſal of worldly profit, though incumbred with many difficulties, and liable to many uncertainties, we ſhall not only have an attentive hearing, but active care and diligent purſuit of the deſign; it will be driven to the laſt glimpſe of hope; and if the firſt attempt miſcarry, the next occaſion is laid hold of; but here, where the *prize* is ſo rich, the *conditions* ſo eaſie, the *acqueſt* ſo certain, yet (as if theſe were deterring, averting qualities) we cannot be got to take the matter into our deliberation. Alas, what ſtupid folly has poſſeſt men? And by what *meaſures* do they make their *eſtimates*? How are their precious Souls become ſo vile in their eyes, that they are the only part of them, which they think below their regard? In an *Epidemick* diſeaſe every man looks out for *Antidote* or Medicine for his own peculiar, and does not acquieſce in that ſilly confidence that he ſhall do as well as other men: yet in this greater danger, that is their avowed comfort, and keeps them as chearful as if they had the moſt ſolid grounds of

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ſecurity. Alas, can numbers *out-face* damnation, or do men hope that by going in troops to Hell they ſhall *maſter* the native inhabitants, *ſubdue* thoſe legions of tormentors, and become *conquerers* inſtead of *ſufferers*? This is ſure too wild an imagination for any to entertain, yet what more ſober one can any pretend, in favour of ſo ſtupendous an improvidence?

BUT 'twill be much more ſeaſonable to *reform* than *Apologize* or *Rhetoricate*; and therefore 'twill import thoſe men, who like the inhabitants of *Laiſh*, dwell *careleſs*, quiet, and ſecure, to look about them; to enter into *ſerious* conſultation how they may avert that ruine which waits upon ſuch a ſupine temper; not to ſuffer themſelves to periſh in the midſt of ſuch poſſibilities, nay ſolicitations to be ſaved: but at laſt afford an audience to that Embaſſie which is ſent them from Heaven. Ponder well thoſe *eaſie* terms of reconciliation which are propos'd: the *ineſtimable advantages* conſequent to the embracing that amity; and the as *ineſtimable detriment* of refuſing it: In a word, not to pleaſe themſelves with the *empty title*, but to penetrate the *full purport* and ſignificancy of their Chriſtianity, and when they have done this ſoberly and attentively; having removed this firſt and moſt general obſtruction to piety, they will find themſelves aſſaulted by ſuch force of *reaſon*, that they muſt either be very ill *Logicians*, or very good *Chriſtians*.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Partial Conſideration.

NEXT to the *ſtupid* and meerly vegetable ſtate of total incogitancy, we may rank that *partial* and peace-meal conſideration, by which Chriſtianity is mutilated and deform'd, depriv'd of all its force to attract and ſubdue mens hearts: for as in *artificial* Movements, there is ſuch a dependence of one part upon another, that the ſubſtracting of any one deſtroys the whole frame: ſo in this *ſpiritual* Machin deſign'd to raiſe our dull mortality to Heaven, the divine wiſdom of its maker has combin'd its ſeveral parts, that he who ſevers, ruines; he that applies it not in its united ſtrength, will find no aid from its unjoynted ſcattered particles. St. *Paul* tells us, 1 *Cor.* 12. that in the natural body, the making it all Eye, or Hand, the reducing the many members to one, is deſtructive to its being: (if they were all one member where were the body, *verſe* 20.) and we in reaſon muſt expect the ſame event will follow here. If we advance one part of our Chriſtian Faith to the annihilation of the reſt, 'tis impoſſible that ſhould ſupply the place of the whole; but the more that member is ſwoln above its native ſize, the more *unweildy*, not the more *ſtrong* it grows; and loſes that active vigor, which

which it receiv'd by a ſocial communication with the other parts.

'TIS Gods charge againſt the *Prieſts*, *Mal.* 2. that *they have been partial in the Law*, נשאתם פנים lifters up of faces in it; preferr'd *ſome* more agreeable parts, and diſcountenanc'd *others*; were not *only* judges of the Law, but *unjuſt* judges too. And I fear the endictment may now run more generally againſt the People alſo; that they have been partial in the Goſpel: culled and choſen out thoſe ſofter and more gentle dictates which ſhould leſs grate and diſturb them: like well the *Oil* that makes them have a chearful countenance, but are not ſo forward to deal with the *Wine* which ſhould ſearch and cleanſe their ſores. We make all our addreſſes to the *promiſes*, hug and careſs them, and in the interim let the *commands* ſtand by neglected. A *divinity* indeed fitly apportion'd to the devotion of *theſe times*, which loves to make an *offering to God of that which coſts them nothing*, and yields a preference to that way of *worſhip* which aſſures Salvation *beſt cheap*, and at the *eaſieſt terms*; but would men conſider, they would find, that the *commands* are the ſupreme and moſt eminent part of the *Evangelical Covenant*, the *promiſes* come but as *hand-maids* and attendants: an honourable retinue to invite the more reſpectful entertainment, and it ſhould be remembred that of this *ſort* are the *threatnings* too; and therefore they have ſurely an equal right to our regard, eſpecially when many of them have the acceſſion of

of Gods *Oath*, to bind and ſtrengthen their *performance*. And what a ſcandalous and abſurd partiality is this, that when the precepts come with this ſolemnity, the more to command our reverence, we ſingle out this one part of the Train and pay our homage unto it; lay hold on the *Promiſes*, not thoſe that ſpeak *damnation* to impenitence, but the other half of them which give *aſſurances* of favour. And like the *Benjamites* to the daughters of *Shiloh*, run away with them, poſſeſs our ſelves of theſe by rape, in ſpight of all the incapacities we lye under; though God has ſworn, that no diſobedient provoker ſhall enter into his reſt.

THAT this is really the caſe of many is more than probable; for by what other artifice is it poſſible for them to reconcile their large hopes, with their no purifying; their confident expectations of Heaven, with their greedy rapacious purſuits of Earth; their ſecure dependence on the Bloud of their *Saviour*, with their remorſleſs effuſions of that of their *Brethren*? Did they conſider the inſeparable *connexion* between the Precepts and the Promiſes, 'twere hard for them to be ſo *wicked*, but impoſſible to be ſo *ſanguine*. Did the *unclean* perſon believe that none but *the pure in heart ſhall ſee God*, if he could be ſo much *Swine*, as ſtill to chuſe the *mire*; yet ſure he could not expect to be Rapt from thence into Heaven. Did the *Drunkard* conſider the ſentence of the Apoſtle *excluding all ſuch from the Kingdom of God*, 1 *Cor.* 6. 10. if he can be content ſo ſadly

to

to over-buy his sin; as to pay that Kingdom for his shot; yet certainly even he cannot be sot enough to expect the possession of what he has so sold, or hope that from one of his drunken *trances*, he shall *awake* to *glory*. Did the *Covetous* extortioner observe that he is involv'd in the same sentence, remember that such Violents *shall take*, not *heaven*, but *hell*, *by force*; if the terrors of the Lord could not have force enough to melt his bowels, to unclutch his griping hand, or dissieze him of his prey: yet sure it must discourage him from grasping of Heaven too, from hoping to defraud *God* as he has done *men*, and striking himself into an estate in the land of the living: and in like manner all other hoping sinners if they would ruine, yet must cease from flattering themselves, must chuse *damnation* bare-fac'd, and not fancy that their posting on in the broad way shall ever bring them to *life*. And sure this discovery of their estate, were a very good step to the curing it: For though 'tis possible some few may be of so *sturdy* an impiety, as to chuse their *sin* with all its consequents; yet sure all sinners are not of that strong complexion, and therefore *Satan* is put to his wiles and artifices, is fain to *hoodwink* those that are apt to *start*; and disguises the danger when he sees the true appearance of it will terrifie and avert. This was his *old* policy with our *first* parents; he dazles their eyes with the *glorious*, but *abusive* proposal of becoming like *Gods*, that they might not discern how near they were approaching to become like *Devils*: and

this under the pretence of confidence and friendſhip, diſcovering, as it were, a ſecret to them, that God envied them that promotion, which his greater kindneſs was ſolicitous to procure for them. And as if the ruine of mankind, *in Maſſa* had been too ſlight a *Trophey* for that one Stratagem, he repeats it again to the individuals, perſwades men that the path of obedience which God has chalkt out is ſtrait, and narrow, rugged and incumbred; that there is a ſhorter cut, an eaſier paſſage to life: that they may be led into *Canaan* a nearer way, ſtep into it immediately from the fleſh-pots of *Egypt*, and ſcape the tedious weary March in the Wilderneſs: never ſo much as call at Mount *Sinai*, or be affrighted with the *Thunders of the Law*. In a word, they need not *work out their Salvation*, but be they never ſo ſlothful *they may inherit the promiſes*, *Heb.* 6. 12. this is his one grand *Concluſion*, though he has ſeveral *mediums* to infer it by: wherewith as with ſo many *tools* and Engines he furniſhes men for the *filing* or breaking of that ſacred link between duty and reward; and of theſe he has great variety fitted to the hands, and skill of thoſe that manage them. I ſhall not undertake to ranſack his *workhouſe*, or give an inventory of his *Utenſils*, but ſhall rather in general beſeech all thoſe, who have made this unhappy ſeparation, to remember from whoſe *Forge* they took their *Inſtruments*; and then conſider whether his officiouſneſs in ſupplying them, can argue any thing but that 'tis his work they are about. Can any think that he,

he, whoſe eternal paſtime it will be to torment men, can really be ſolicitous of their eaſe; that he would chuſe out for them the *pleaſanteſt paths*, were it not that he knows they lead to the *chambers of death*? When *Chriſt* whoſe ſole buſineſs it was to ſave mens ſouls, has preſcrib'd us a *courſe* which ſhall aſſuredly conduct us unto *happineſs*, what can it be but phrenſie to reſort to *Abaddon*, the deſtroyer for an eaſier *method*, or expect more *gentleneſs* and compaſſion from the *roaring Lion*, than from the *Lamb of God*.

NAY indeed this is not only to attribute to him more tenderneſs, but fidelity too: to believe him in oppoſition to all the expreſs affirmations of God; and when he who is truth itſelf has told us, that *except we repent we ſhall all periſh*, *Luke* 13. 5. and that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord*, *Heb.* 12. 14. to disbelieve this only upon his bare credit, who was a lyar from the beginning: This indeed is a prodigious compoſition of blaſphemy and folly; a ſtrange contumely to *God*, but fatal treachery to our *ſelves*: For alas! Satan entertains us all this while but with a trick of *Legerdemain*, and as *Juglers* make us believe we have cut the *ſtring*, which yet preſently after they ſhew us *whole*; ſo he perſwades us he has thus ſever'd the *Condition* from the *Promiſes*, when to our grief it will finally appear their union was *inviolable*. 'Tis not all our vain confidence that can reverſe the immutable divine Law; we may, 'tis true, delude our ſelves, keep up our ſpirits high; in a ſecure jollity *eat*

and drink, and riſe up to play, and ſo not only loyter, but revel out our *day*, till the *night* overtake us *wherein no man can work*; but we ſhall never be able to propagate the deceit, where only it could avail us; to perſwade God to pay the *hire* to thoſe that have been no labourers, or give the *prize* to any who have not run to obtain it. Let every man therefore in a juſt tenderneſs to his own Soul, ſtrictly examine his hopes, try, not how *high* they towre, but how *deep* they are founded; whether on the *ſand* or on the *rock*; the flattering deluſions of Satan, and the dreams of his own Phancy, or on the Promiſes of God: for though all pretend to build on the latter, yet God knows, a multitude of fooliſh *Architects* there are, which miſtake their ground, take that for aſſurance that is not: And this truely is a thing deſerves to be ſoberly conſider'd; they that moſt greedily catch at the Promiſes, do often embrace a *cloud* inſtead of the *Deity* which they ſo eagerly graſp, and thereby think to enjoy. But *faithful* obedience, and not *inſolent* hopes, commend us unto God. The Goſpel indeed deſcribes to us great and ineſtimable *felicities*; but he that can think this gives him *Title* to them, may as well pretend to the whole *World*, becauſe he has the *Map* of it in his houſe: for though it mentions them to all, yet it promiſes them to none but the obedient. And thoſe *Iſraelites* which fled from the ſight of *Goliah*, 1 *Sam.* 17. 24. might as reaſonably challenge the reward propos'd to the victor, as men can pretend to

to enter into life without keeping the Commandments: this then is the one *Criterion*, by which a man may judge of his hopes; if they be but proportionable to his obedience, they are then regular, and ſuch as will not make him aſham'd, but prove incentives and engagements to every good work. Let him obey as much as he can, and then he need not deny himſelf the comfort of hoping as much as he can too. But if his *hopes* exceed this meaſure, and ſquare themſelves only by his *wiſhes*; if he look for Heaven, not becauſe he is *qualified* for it, but becauſe he wants or *covets* it; this is rather to dream than hope, and ſuch *whimſies* will as ſoon inveſt the beggar in *wealth*, the defam'd in *honour*, the ſick in *health*, or any man in any thing he has but a mind to, as compaſs *Heaven* for the bold *Fiduciary*.

IT is indeed like thoſe *Lunacies* wherein mens fancies adopt them Heirs to thoſe Kingdoms, they know nothing more of, than the names; and ſure the Analogy holds as well in the *cure* as the *diſeaſe*: let theſe *Patients* awhile be kept dark, taken from the dazling contemplations of their imaginary priviledges, to the ſad reflection on their ſins: and as God expoſtulates with *Iſrael*, Ezek. 33. 26. *Ye ſtand upon your ſword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every man his neighbours wife, and ſhall ye poſſeſs the land?* So let them recite to themſelves the Catalogues of their impieties, and then ask their own hearts, whether theſe be the qualifications of thoſe that ſhall reſt in Gods holy hill? Whether theſe marks of the

Beaſt can ever rank them among the followers of the *Lamb*? And let theſe Conſiderations be preſt home, reiterated ſo often, till by repeated ſtrokes they have made good the other part of the method, made their Souls bleed, and by that Spiritual *Phlebotomy*, temper'd their ſwelling veins, allayed the over-ſanguineſs of their conſtitution: and then there remains but one thing more to complete the courſe, and that is bringing them into the *Work-houſe*, ſetting them really to *work out* their *ſalvation with fear and trembling*, which they had ſo near played away by confidence and preſumption: And when they have done thus, they have verified their hopes, and then may ſafely reaſſume them: They are return'd again with advantage to their firſt point, and are that in *ſoberneſs* and *reality*, which they then were only in *fiction* and *imagination*.

AND now would God men would once be content to be thus diſabus'd; that they would not be ſo in love with deceit, as in the Prophets phraſe, *Jer.* 8. 5. to *hold it faſt*: that they would not chuſe *Chimæra's* and *phantaſtick* Images before *real* and *ſubſtantial* Felicities; and prefer that hope which will be ſure to *ſhip-wrack* them, before that which will be *an Anchor of the Soul, ſure and ſtedfaſt*, *Heb.* 6. 19. and if this ſo reaſonable a propoſal may be embrac't; if the World ſhould, as the *Spaniard* ſaid, but *riſe wiſe one morning*, what a deal of dead merchandize would Satan have upon his hands? Many of thoſe they call the comfortable Doctrines would want vent, which are

now

now the Staple commodity of his Kingdom. What thoſe are, 'tis no part of my deſign to examine, it will be every mans particular concern to do it for himſelf; which he may do by this one teſt; whether they more animate men to *hope* well, than to *live* well? Whether they bring *Alexanders* ſword to cut aſunder the *Gordian* knot, to ſever between the promiſe and the condition? Or the ſword of the *Spirit* to ſubdue all to the obedience of Chriſt? If the former, we may expect the fruits of ſuch will be all that licentiouſneſs which St. *Paul* deſcribes, as *the works of the fleſh*, *Gal.* 5. 19. it being not to be imagin'd, that the *precepts* of the Goſpel, which they divide from the *promiſes* only, that they might fall off, ſhall then be *voluntarily* taken up in mere good nature and heroick Generoſity; that thoſe who are ſo induſtrious to avoid the neceſſity of *Chriſtian practice*, will make it their *free-will-offering*. If there ſhould happen to be ſome few of ſo ingenuous a gratitude; yet 'tis certain, that is not our common mould; few men will be better than they think their intereſt bids them be, and therefore ſuch principles are dangerous Seminaries of *Libertiniſm*: and 'tis mens very important concernment not to admit them. Let not then their chearful *aſpect* recommend them to our *embraces*; men may be kill'd with too much *Cordial*; that which ſeems to refreſh the *Spirits* may enflame the *Bloud*, and though *cold poiſons* have gotten the fame of being the moſt *malignant*, yet there are *hot* that are as infallibly *mortiferous*. Let it be

our care in oppoſition to both, to keep our ſelves in that moderate, equal temper, which belongs to *healthy* Souls: and ſince that is the vitalleſt heat which is gotten by exerciſe, ſet to our buſineſs, employ our ſelves diligently in all thoſe duties the Goſpel exacts, and then we ſhall not want ſuch an hope as may warm our hearts, keep us in a chearful expectation, till we come to the glorious fruition of that *Eternal Salvation which God has promiſed to all them, and only them that obey him.* And till we do thus, till we conſider as well what we are to *do*, as what we are to *receive*; there will be no hope of reſtoring Chriſtianity to its native vigour: we ſhall make it evaporate all its ſtrength in *unſignificant hopes*, convert it into Air, to bear up our Bubbles, inſtead of that *firm ground*, whereon we ſhould build *vertue* here, and *glory* hereafter.

CHAP. V.

A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Carnal Conſideration.

AFTER the diſadvantages of *Partial* Conſideration, may fairly be ſubjoyn'd the ills of that advertency, which is impregnated by *ſenſuality* and ſloth, and makes pretence unto right *reaſon*, but tends indeed as much as any thing to the fruſtrating the deſign, and enfeebling

feebling the force of our Religion: such close *reserves* of deceit and malice have men to their own Souls, that when they quit *one* strong hold of Satans, 'tis only to retreat to *another*. When they are not so *brisk* and Aerial, as lightly to skip over those precepts, that lye in their way, they are so *gross* and unwary as to fall at them; if they may not pass for Straws and Chaffe, such as every blast of vain confidence may blow away, they shall then be improved into Heaps and Mountains, become stones of stumbling and rocks of offence; and when they are call'd upon to Consider them, they do it in so perverse a manner, as if they meant to revenge themselves on that unwelcome importunity: their *consideration* is worse than *neglect*. They look into them insidiously, not as *Disciples* but as *Spies*; not to weigh the obligeingness, but to quarrel the unreasonableness or difficulty of the injunctions; not to direct their *practice*, but excuse their *prevarications*.

FROM this unsincere kind of inspection it is, that the *Precepts* have got so formidable appearance with many, that they have fallen under such heavy prejudices, as to resolve them intolerable yokes, insuperable tasks: that this *Canaan* is a land that eats up its inhabitants, wherein there is so little of *enjoyment*, that it scarce affords a *being*. Men count a *life* under such restraints, so joyless and uneasie, that it differs from *death* only, by being more *passive*. They think *Zeal* like a *Hectick Feaver*, in a slow, but certainly fatal *Fire*, exhausts and consumes the *Spirits*. Mortification

fication and *ſelf-denial* macerate and decay the *body*; and *liberality* diſſipates and waſtes the *eſtate*: And with theſe Apparitions, which themſelves have conjur'd up, men run frighted from duty, reſolve the burden is unſupportable, or at leaſt grievous to be born, and therefore, as our Saviour ſays of the *Phariſees, will not touch it*, no not ſo much as *with one of their fingers*, *Mat.* 23. 4. never make any attempt to try what indeed they are; but take their meaſures from their own, or perhaps other mens prejudicate opinions, and thence take out an *Authentick Record* and *Patent* for ſloth, fancy the journey too long for them, and therefore ſit ſtill; firſt call Chriſts Commandments *grievous*, and then improve that ſlander into a *manumiſſion*; abſolve themſelves from obeying them. And unleſs they may have the Gate to life cut wider, made capacious enough to receive them with all their luſts about them; will never eſſay to enter it.

BUT if the *Prince of darkneſs* have enacted it a *Law*, that difficulty ſhall paſs for excuſe, yet if *real* uneaſineſs may be admitted to be as deterring as *imaginary* ones, his own decree will retort the moſt ruinouſly on himſelf, and men may plead it as their diſcharge from all thoſe baſe drudgeries, thoſe tyrannous impoſitions wherewith he loads them. The *Drunkard* may experimentally tell him, the *pain* of an aking head, of an overcharged ſtomack, the *ruine* of a waſted Eſtate, and claim a diſpenſation from purſuing that uneaſie and coſtly ſin. The *Wanton* may bring

bring his macerated body like the *Levites* Concubine, *Judg.* 19. & urge it as an evidence how cruel a Maſter he ſerves; and from thence emancipate and free himſelf: And indeed every ſin carries in it ſo much of viſible toil, or ſecret ſmart, as would by force of this rule ſupplant and undermine itſelf; and ſure *Satan* would never have arm'd men with ſo dangerous a *weapon*, had he not diſcern'd them ſo in love with *ſlavery*, as ſecures him it ſhould never be us'd againſt him; for if it ſhould, nothing could give him a more mortal wound, more irrecoverably ſhake his Kingdom. Nor would only that *infernal Region* feel the force of that *deſtructive* principle; it would make as ſtrange confuſions in *ſecular Regiments.*

FOR if ſuch *pleas* as theſe may be admitted, they will eaſily cancel all *Humane*, as well as *Divine* Laws, and every *malefactor* will transfer his *guilt* on the ſeverity of the *Legiſlator*: The *Thief* may ſay it is too great a difficulty for him to reſiſt the temptation of an apt *opportunity*; a rich prize that his fingers are too ſlippery even for himſelf, and he cannot reſtrain them, and then quarrel the ſtrictneſs of the *Law*, which has rais'd ſo high a fence about mens properties, that he who climbs it muſt endanger his *neck.* The *Rebel* may complain that the bands of *Allegiance* are too ſtreight, the yoke ſits too cloſe, galls and frets his tender fleſh, exclaim loudly at the *Tyranny* of thoſe that laid it on, and in that out-cry drown the noiſe of his own *Treaſon.* And ſo every other tranſgreſſor may accuſe the rule, as acceſſary

ceſſary to his ſwervings, till at laſt the *Laws* be made the only *Criminals*.

I LEAVE every man to judge both of the equity and conſequencies of ſuch diſcourſings in *Civil* matters, and ſhall only deſire he will apply them to *Spiritual* alſo, where certainly they are neither more juſt, nor leſs ruinous: and whileſt ſuch abſurd *pretences* as theſe paſs currant, no wonder if *Chriſtianity* languiſh and grow impotent, want ſtrength to impreſs itſelf on the lives of its *profeſſors*. The moſt infallible receipt can work no cure on him, who upon the ſuſpicion of its bitterneſs, refuſes to taſte it. The moſt excellent *Laws* muſt loſe their regulating *power*, where the *execution* of them is obſtructed; and we may as reaſonably look for the efficacy of *Chriſtianity* among thoſe who never heard the *name*, as among thoſe, who owning the *name*, do yet diſclaim its *precepts*; and ſo all thoſe interpretatively do, who by accuſing them of too great rigour, avert both themſelves and others from their Obedience.

THAT the Charge is ſcandalouſly unjuſt will appear to any, who ſhall allow themſelves the juſt means of information; but alas! the way of *Proceſs* men take in this affair is ſo inequitable, as certainly preſages the partiality of the *ſentence*: What perſon ever was there ſo innocent, ſo excellent, who if arraign'd at the *Tribunal* of his mortal enemy, could be acquitted? *Chriſt* himſelf ſhall be pronounc'd a *Blaſphemer*, when a *Caiphas* is to examine him: and no wonder if his *precepts* find

propor-

proportionable dealing; if they be decried as *impossible*, *tyrannical*, perhaps *ridiculous* too, where the scanning of them is referred to those, whose interest it is to defame them. Men enthrone their *lusts*, set them up in the *judgment-seat*, and none can expect they shall pass such a *sentence*, as shall include their own *condemnation*: if they own the *Commandment* to be *holy*, *just* and *good*, they must tacitly accuse *themselves* to be *impure*, *unjust* and *wicked*, and as such to be consign'd to wrath and judgment.

HERE then we have the true account how Christs *commands*, which are in themselves so *far* from grievous, have gotten so unkind a *reputation* among us; this is so direct a course for it, that we may cease our *wonder*, though not our *grief* to see it; for we behold them stand to the award of those with whom they have a profest enmity: the *Goal* gives sentence on the Bench; the *Bar* arraigns the Judgment-Seat. Certainly when that Law which is *Spiritual* is submitted to the arbitriment of gross *carnality*, the Law of liberty is taxed and rated by those worst *bondmen who are sold under sin*; 'tis impossible to find any fairer treatment. That which comes on purpose to dethrone sin, dispossess it of the Empire it has usurpt, will certainly be entertain'd with the same *exclamation* the Devils us'd to Christ, *Why art thou come to torment us?* But as if this *general Antipathy* were not enough to ascertain the rejection of Christs command; as if the *National* feud, as I may call it, between Heaven and Hell were not thought irrecon-

irreconcileable enough, men offer yet harder meaſure, call in the aid of *perſonal* quarrels, and when the precepts come to be conſider'd, refer each of them ſingle to that *particular* Vice to which it has the directeſt *contrariety*.

THUS when Chriſts command of *meekneß and forgiveneſs, of loving enemies, and turning the cheek, bearing the Croß*, or *ſelf-denial* calls for audience; they conſult (as *Rehoboam* did with his young hot-ſpurs) with their anger and malice, their rankor and revenge, and they ſoon give their *Verdict*; that to be meek is to be *ſervile*, a temper fit only for the abject. That to forgive enemies is a principle of *cowardize* that would Emaſculate the world; to love them a piece of *Spaniel-like fawning*; but to turn the Cheek; not only to hazard, but invite new injuries by owning them as benefits; paying bleſſing for curſes, kindneſs and good-turns for hatred, is ſuch a *ridiculous patience*, as muſt expoſe to the inſolence of many, and the ſcorn and deriſion of all men. And then the *reſolution* is ready, they will be no ſuch *fools* for Chriſts ſake. So when the precept of humility and lowlineſs comes to be conſider'd, their *Pride* is deputed to hear its plea, and then though it bring the authority of Chriſts *example* as well as his *command*, it will be judg'd invalid: *Chriſt* indeed *took upon him the form of a Servant*, and to that, humility was a proportionable *Adjunct*; but what is that to them whoſe aſpiring humor abhors ſubjection, 'tis not calculated for their *Meridian*, they are of another manner

ner of Spirit, and would not have it embaſed by the admiſſion of ſo mean a quality: and though Chriſt hath put *poverty of Spirit* among his Beatitudes, they reſolve he ſhall not enſnare them with that *artifice*, they will not take his *meaſures* of felicity; or reſign that pleaſure they have in valuing themſelves, for any thing he propoſes in exchange. In like manner the precepts of temperance, ſobriety and chaſtity, are not permitted to the judgement of ſober *reaſon*, nay, nor of mere natural *deſire*; but to *appetites* vitiated and inflam'd by radicated *habits*; and then the *Glutton* thinks, to eat moderately, is to be ſtarv'd; and will as ſoon *put a knife*, Prov. 23. *to his throat*, in the vulgar ſenſe of cutting it, as in *Solomons* notion of reſtraining his exceſs. Thus the *Drunkard* with his falſe thirſts looks on ſobriety as a kind of Hell, where he ſhall want *a drop to cool his tongue*, and thinks the abandoning his debaucht jollities is an implicite adieu to all the comforts of life. The *Unclean* perſon, when his bloud is high, ſcoffs at Chaſtity as a religious kind of impotence, and only ſo far conſiders the *precept* of *pulling out the Eye*, as to infer that it were as eaſie literally to part with it, as to reſtrain its luſtful range; not look at all, as not look to luſt. And proportionably it fares with Charity and bounty, which though our *Saviour* recommend, *Mammon* arraigns of robbery, and ſtigmatizes as a *Thief* that picks the Purſe, and rifles Coffers. But amidſt all theſe, *the taking up the Croſs, ſuffering for righteouſneſs ſake*, and *the doctrine of ſelf-denial*,

nial, fall under the heavieſt prejudice. Theſe are oppos'd not by ſome one ſingle vice, but the confederate arms of all; even thoſe, whoſe intereſts are flatly oppoſite, do here unite: *Herod* and *Pilate*, *Sadduces* and *Phariſees* accord againſt Chriſt, and all are freely ſuffer'd, nay invited to exhibit their *complaints* againſt theſe *Mandates*. *Covetouſneſs* cries out that this is the moſt ruinous prodigality, caſts away an eſtate in a lump, and lays all open to forfeiture and confiſcation: and *Prodigality* takes it as ill to be foreſtall'd, and have nothing left for it to diſſipate. *Prophaneſs* avows a contempt of it as a folly, and moſt open madneſs to part with *real* pleaſure for an *empty* name, or profit for that *Bankrupt thing* call'd Conſcience: and *Hypocriſie* has a more ſecret hatred of it, as its detector; that which will bring it to a Teſt which it cannot paſs. *Malice* puts in a *Caveat*, that this is to gratifie enemies, and loſe the ſatisfactions of revenge: and *Self-Love* puts in another, that it is to deſtroy ones ſelf. In ſhort, every *limb* of the body of ſin diſcharges a *blow* at this innocent and Divine Sanction; as if they meant it ſhould exemplifie its own doctrine by aſſuming that paſſive temper it recommends.

BUT alas, who can expect any more *upright* verdicts from ſuch *pack*, ſuch *corrupt* Juries, and why may not Chriſt be permitted to claim the common *benefit* of our *Laws*, to make his challenge and exceptions againſt this ſo incompetent *impanel*. 'Tis the counſel of the Wiſe man, not

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to adviſe in common affairs with thoſe whoſe tempers may be ſuppos'd to biaſs them, *Conſult not*, ſays he, *with a coward in matters of war, nor with a ſluggard, of much buſineſs*, *Eccluſ.* 37.11. and ſure if they be ill *Counſellors*, they muſt be worſe *Judges*: but why then do we ſet pride to judge of humility, luſt of purity, covetouſneſs of liberality; and make our *vices* the *arbitrators* of thoſe *Laws* which ſhould reſtrain them? This is ſuch a groſs *injuſtice* as common *humanity* abhors; we deal by other meaſures with men, the moſt notorious and flagitious criminals, and reſerve this way of proceſs for thoſe things only wherein our God may be concern'd. 'Tis a ſevere exprobration of a prophane people, *Malach.* 1.8 Where God accuſes them for treating *him* with leſs reverence than they would do a *mortal* Prince. *Offer it now to thy Prince*: but alas! we ſhall force him to deſcend far lower in his expoſtulation, ſo far we are from paying him the *duty* and regard belonging to a *Prince*, that we yield him not the rights of *common* men; force him to ſtand to thoſe meaſures which we think too unequitable to preſs upon a murderer, a thief, or rebel at the Bar.

BUT this waving of common rules is a plain confeſſion that we need more indulgence, than thoſe will allow: When mens *luſts* thus uſurp the *Tribunal*, and judge in their own cauſe, 'tis a palpable diſcovery they dare not remit themſelves to any more equal determination. And indeed in this point of their intereſt, they paſs a

right judgment: for 'tis certain were the *caſe* referr'd to any competent Judge, indeed to *any* but *themſelves*, they would inevitably be caſt; and ſure 'tis high time that ſome ſhould aſſiſt *oppreſt vertue* in its appeal; find it out ſome *Court of equity* where its plea may be heard: and we need not travel *far* for that purpoſe, every man may do it in his own *breaſt*, where in his little *Common-wealth* he ſhall find a *Court* of Gods erecting: let him but draw the Cauſe *thither*, diſcuſs the matter in his own conſcience; and he will ſoon find the former unrighteous ſentences revers'd: let him but ſeriouſly reflect on his *violations* of thoſe ſacred Precepts of Chriſt; and obſerve what a *ſting* and ſecret remorſe every ſuch *breach* leaves within him: and that will be a competent atteſtation of the *equity* and obligingneſs of thoſe Mandates: for from whence elſe can the regret ariſe? Thoſe things that are either impoſſible in their nature, or unconcerning to us cannot beget it. No man accuſes himſelf for not flying in the *air*, or walking upon the *water*; nor owns himſelf *guilty* in the non-obſervance of any *Laws*, but ſuch as have *power* to oblige him: and therefore theſe cloſe pangs and checks of *Conſcience* are an irrefragable evidence, that men do *inwardly* aſſent to the juſtice and authority of thoſe divine *rules*, which their *actions*, yea often their *words* too, do moſt oppugn.

BUT over and above the throws and afterpains of conſcience, when ſin is brought forth, the ſelf-accuſation of the *Criminal*, when none beſide

ſide controuls, nay many flatter and commend: I ſay beyond this ſecondary and reflext *Apology*, for Chriſts Law, owed to the foregoing prevarication of it; there is an early and immediate *verdict* paſt in its behalf, in the eſteem and liking which thoſe documents command, where ere they paſs: creating an aſſent and veneration not only when obey'd, but from poſſeſt deſpiſers; who cannot chuſe but think well of that vertue they deſert, and the neceſſity of their affairs compel them to ſpeak ill of. An event *viſible* in the condemnation of our Saviour, where the *Judge* who *gave ſentence* againſt him, at the ſame moment *waſht his hands*, and openly profeſt, *he found no fault in him.*

AND indeed this very reflection on the *Author* of theſe precepts, if well conſider'd, would ſuperſede all other arguments. The *Mandates* of the Goſpel on this one ſcore, that they are Chriſts, are certainly both *pure* in themſelves, and *poſſible* to us: and ſo moſt worthy not only of all *obedience*, but all *love* too. He who is our *Lord* upon both the titles of *Creation* and *Redemption*, may certainly with all juſtice impoſe what laws he pleaſes on us. Yet he, who laid down his life for the redemption of the tranſgreſſions which were under the firſt Teſtament, cannot be imagin'd ſo inconſiderate of our frailty which himſelf had ſmarted for, as to introduce another of equal rigor, or be ſo prodigal of his bloud, as to pour it out for thoſe who by a new Set of impoſſible commands ſhould infalli-

bly reforfeit themſelves again: and if this cannot be ſuppos'd, the contrary may be concluded, that he hath ſo far condeſcended to our imbecillity, as not to *preſcribe* us any thing which he either finds or makes us not able to *perform*. 'Tis true indeed, his *Laws* are above the reach of our corrupt and debaſed *nature*; and they were unfit to be his, were they not ſo: but when he by his grace offers to elevate and refine this nature, bring it up to the pitch and purity of thoſe Laws, this is a far greater mercy than if he had deſcended to our corruption; ſo he might have contaminated himſelf, given laws unworthy of him: But alas! what advantage would it be to us, to have the *Blaſphemy* mention'd, *Pſal.* 50. ſo verified, to have our *God* in this ſenſe, *ſuch a one as our ſelves*? But by this other *Method* he purifies, and exalts us; puts us in a capacity of being *like unto him*, in which is ſumm'd up at once, all both *vertue* and *felicity*.

AND on this glorious *end*, every particular *command* of his has a direct aſpect, every one of them tending to *re-impreſs* on us ſome part of that divine *image* which was raz'd out by the *firſt ſin*: and this one would think enough to recommend them to our higheſt value. Certainly, if *Conſcience* may be *Judge*, it will be ſo: there being in this caſe no middle between *devout* reverence, and *horrid* blaſphemy; for he that deſpiſes ſuch an *aſſimilation*, muſt neceſſarily alſo deſpiſe *him* who is ſo *reſembled*: he who thinks meekneſs, purity, humility, *&c. unamiable qualities*

lities, can have little esteem for him, in whom they are so *transcendently eminent*, but will take the Prophet at his word, and say, *there is no form nor comeliness in him*, *Es.* 53. But this sure can never be the *Verdict* of Conscience; he that can thus *pronounce*, must be suppos'd to have suppress't and *silenc'd* that. It being one of the most indeleble *notions* there, that *all that is in God, is sublimely excellent*. But because 'tis indeed too possible that Conscience may be put under such an undue restraint, suffer the violence of a *Prisoner*, when it should sustain the place of a *Judge*: because many men dare not permit their consciences to speak, lest they should say more than they are willing to hear. And lastly, since these persons make their appeal to reason, pretend the aids, and boast in the advantages of that, it may not be amiss to bring the *Cause* unto that *Bar*: whose *Empire* and *Authority* none must disclaim that own the *Style*, and least of all those *Scepticks* in Religion with whom we have to do; who will allow of no conviction but from it.

AND *God*, who as the Apostle says, *leaves not himself without witness*, has so temper'd and dispos'd his *Precepts* as to qualifie them to pass even this Test also, they being not the *contradictions* but *improvements* of natural Reason: and so most apt to recommend themselves to all that is *Man*, not *Brute* about us. Indeed they have the very same aim and design with that. It has ever been the grand business of *sober reason* first to discover, and then to attain that *one supreme*

good, which would give reſt and felicity to the ſoul: in this inquiſition have the *Philoſophers* and greateſt Maſters of Reaſon, laid out their moſt ſerious ſtudies and deepeſt contemplations; and in their indefatigable purſuits ſeem joyntly to ſigh out *David*'s queſtion, *Who will ſhew us any good?* And now the *Goſpel* comes a ſolution of this ſo important a Query, *brings theſe glad tidings of joy* to all people, and that not only in its *credenda*, by informing us what that *good* is; but in its *agenda* too, by tracing us out the *way* to it; beating us a path which will certainly lead us to that *ſummum bonum* which our very *nature* implicitly gaſps after: and ſure *reaſon* can never jar with *this*, which comes thus as a happy *Auxiliary* to ſuccour its impotence: as an infallible *guid* to conduct its ſteps: and as a glorious *light* to give it a clear view of what it before blindly groped after. 'Tis a certain Indication of *madneſs*, to *tear* and miſchief thoſe things that would be uſeleſs to us, to curſe and revile a friend, or fly in the face of thoſe whoſe charity brings them to our aid; and therefore 'tis moſt evident that *reaſon* muſt firſt ceaſe to be reaſon, and commence *phrenzy*, before 'tis poſſible it can ſet itſelf in defiance of thoſe Laws of Chriſt, which are thus accommodated to its greateſt Intereſts.

AND as the accord is thus obſervable in the *ultimate*, ſo is it in the *intermediate* deſign alſo. *Reaſon* had by its twilight diſcern'd, that that Soveraign *bliſs* it aim'd at, would never be hit by

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an unſteady hand; by him who was perpetually toſſed and agitated by his turbulent inordinate appetites. Therefore young men, yet in the heat and ferment of their bloud were ſolemnly proſcrib'd and baniſht from the Schools and Lectures of *Philoſophy*; therefore luſtrations and *Catharticks* of the mind were ſought for, and all endeavour us'd to calm and regulate the *fury*, if not extirpate (which ſome contended for) the very *being* of the Paſſions: that ſo a preparation might be made, *firſt* for the knowledge, and *then* the attainment of felicity: Now the *Goſpel-precepts* have viſibly the ſame *end* and purpoſe: every one of them expreſly ſingling out ſome irregular affection to combate and ſubdue: ſo that *right reaſon* and *they* are evidently of a *Sect* and Party, inſomuch that ſeveral of the ancienteſt Fathers of the Church attributed the excellent documents of *Heathen Philoſophers* to the *Divine* λογῳ, the reaſon and eſſential *Word of God* which after was *incarnate* upon earth; and brought auxiliary ſtrengths of *grace*, to aid the weakneſſes of *nature*. The bleſſed *Jeſus* whoſe bare word *check't the Sea* in its higheſt fury, and by that Miracle atteſted his Divinity; as much exerts himſelf in ſilencing the louder Tempeſts, and calming the inteſtine ſtorms within our breaſts. And certainly *reaſon* will not quarrel to have been thus reliev'd, it being the *property* only of proud *folly* to chuſe rather to *loſe* a victory, than *owe* it to the aid of an Allie.

FROM this general view, it were eaſie to

deſcend to obſerve the exact concurrence of particulars. God loves *a reaſonable ſervice*, and has ſo temper'd his commands, that every Act of obedience we perform may be ſo qualified, and gain unto its votaries the *Elogium* promis'd in the Law of *Moſes*, Deut. 4. 9. *Surely this people is a wiſe and underſtanding People.* And firſt that the command of *Meekneſs* is a moſt *rational* Precept, can never be doubted by any, who remember but the common definition of *Anger*, that it is *Furor brevis*, and ſure 'tis very reaſonable not to be mad; and he that has obſerv'd the unmanly tranſportations of that wild paſſion, how that the firſt violence it offers is to the man within him, will certainly think it the intereſt, not only of his *Religion*, but common prudence, and right *Reaſon* to ſuppreſs it. And the like is to be ſaid of the more ſolemn *Phrenſie* of deep malice and deliberate *Revenge*, where the fury wants the allay of being tranſient and ſhort-liv'd, is embodied into Complexion and temper, and grows inveterate into Nature. *Anger* indeed is a *fire*, and he that touches it though but lightly, will find it *ſcorch* him: but the *Malicious* lays himſelf as it were to *roaſt* at it; prolongs and ſpins out his own *Torment*, as if he meant to anticipate his *puniſhment* in his very crime, and commence his *Hell* here, *in unquenchable fire*. Truly no *ſin* does more repreſent that ſtate of horror to which it tends; it gives a man not only a certain *title*, but an ample *earneſt*, pays him part in hand of thoſe diſmal wages. This was ſo well underſtood

ſtood even by the *Heathens*, that we ſee the *Poets* knew not how more *emphatically* to deſcribe the future *torment* of an envious and malicious perſon, than by the repreſentation of his *ſin*. *Prometheus*'s *Vulture* begins her quarry in this life; every malignant *thought*, every ſpightful *wiſh* preys upon his *heart* that harbours it: every revengeful project puts him in the pangs of labour till it be brought forth; and when it is, it commonly rebounds ſo miſchievouſly upon the Parent, that the birth ſeems like that of *Agrippina*, when ſhe bare *Nero* that murder'd her. And ſurely not only *reaſon*, but common *ſenſe* will ſay this is a ſtate to be deteſted, and conſequently muſt give its ſuffrage to thoſe Laws of Meekneſs and Charity, which are the only expedients to prevent it. *Peace* is deſervedly reckon'd among the *higheſt bleſſings* of Communities, and ſure it has a proportionable value, in every ſingle member of thoſe greater bodies, it being that which is indiſpenſably requiſite to the enjoying of any other good. A *War* we know interrupts at once all the *profits* and *pleaſures* of a Nation: and this hoſtile *temper* in a mans mind does the very ſame, and like *Choler* in the ſtomack, takes off all *guſt* of the moſt delightful things, and ſo becomes a *Hell* in the *pœna damni*, as well as that of *Senſe*: and then how abſurd an impatience is it, for men to think every the ſlighteſt injury from another inſupportable, and yet heap ſuch heavy preſſures upon themſelves; like froward *Children* roar out for the leaſt touch from *another* hand, yet knock

knock and batter *themſelves* without complaint: as if their only contention were, that they may be the ſole *Authors* of their own *calamity*. And that which adds yet more, if it be poſſible to add to ſo vaſt a folly, is, that *revenge* never repairs any *Injury*: If I have been reproacht or defam'd, 'tis not the wounding of my enemies body that will heal my fame; I may by that means help to ſpread the Libel by inviting many to enquire the cauſe of our quarrel: but that is no *Medium* to prove him a ſlanderer, the world being too well acquainted with the nature of revenge to imagine it an argument of his innocency that acts it: ſo far it is from being ſuch, that it gives a moſt violent preſumption of guilt, according to that notable *obſervation* of the *Hiſtorian*, *Convitia ſpreta exoleſcunt, ſi iraſcare agnita videntur.* In like manner ſuppoſe me hurt in my body, *retaliation* brings no *balm* to my ſores: my pains abate not by his having the like or greater; nor would my Wounds *feſter the leſs* though his ſhould *Gangrene*. So if I am endammag'd in my goods, I may contrive to repay him that ill turn, and yet not recover my own loſs; and generally the ſpightful ſpoils that are made, are of that nature. 'Tis true, the Law may in ſome caſes repair the injur'd perſon; but then that is owing to the Juſtice of the *Law*, not to the malice of the *Plaintiff*: for he that ſues upon the naked intuition of recovering his *right*, without any aſpect of *revenge* on the invader, has as fully the benefit of the *Law* (and indeed none can innocently have it

it otherwiſe) and then to what ſerves the vindicative humour, what increment or advantage can the ſuperaddition of his revenge bring him in? 'Tis ſure in all theſe inſtances it often does the quite contrary; plunges him in farther troubles and dangers, and when all this is conſider'd, we may certainly pronounce *Chriſts* precept of Meekneſs partakes as well of the *Serpent* as the *Dove*, is as well *prudent* as *innocent*: nor is this *Concluſion* at all ſhaken by that *Objection* which men make from the danger of inviting more injuries and affronts by this tameneſs: for firſt ſuppoſe there were truth in it; that hazard could not balance the many certain miſchiefs which have been evinc'd inſeparably to follow the contrary temper: and it were certainly leſs penal to endure multitudes of light and tranſient *Abuſes*, than thoſe far more uneaſie ways of *redreſs*, which mens revenges ſuggeſt to them: and then 'twill be perfectly reaſonable, *of* theſe *two evils to chuſe the leſs*. As for the greater and more important violations, there are legal ways which may prove redreſs in ſome caſes, or prevention in others: He that is ſlandered or impoveriſhed, may take a courſe to clear his *Innocence*, or recover his *goods*: he that is hurt or maim'd, though he is uncapable of reparations, yet the Law provides for his future ſecurity, by awarding ſuch *penalties*, as may diſcourage the *offender* from repeating the *violence*: And to theſe aids, a man may reſort with theſe *Proviſo's*, *firſt*, that he abſtract from all deſign of *revenge*; and *ſecondly*, that the matter be

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of *weight*; and certainly he that by theſe *legal means* cannot be ſecur'd, can be much leſs ſo by any *private attempt* of his own: For he that deſpiſeth the coercive *power* of Laws, will much more contemn the *enmity* of a ſingle perſon. The only difficulty in this caſe is, when a ſtate is in ſuch a confuſion that there is no lawful Judicature to appeal to; but that implies ſo many ſadder miſeries, than the want of ſuch a redreſs amounts to, that every man may patiently enough caſt this into the heap of greater evils; and not conſider that one preſſure, when ſo much weightier calamity exacts his grief: But ſure the *ſuſpenſion of Law* in this particular does no more *qualifie* a private perſon to be his own *Revenger*, than it inveſts him in any other part of *Authority*; and he may with as good right place himſelf on the Bench, and become a *Judge* in *other* mens cauſes, as thus become both *Judge* and *Executioner* in his *own*.

BUT in the *laſt* place, the ground of this objection ſeems weak and ſandy; for that meekneſs is not the way to expoſe a man, generally ſpeaking, to more ſuffering: 'tis poſſible indeed through the barbarity of ſome few inſulting *cowards*, who love to vapour *good cheap*, that they may trample on thoſe who give leaſt reſiſtance; but this is not the common bent of *humane Nature*, (which ought to be the meaſure in this caſe) we find men uſually exaſperated by *oppoſition*, who are calm'd and appeas'd by *gentleneſs*. *Anger* is not of the nature of that monſtrous *Fire* the

the *Hiſtorian* tells us of, which *nothing but blows could extinguiſh.* It is the *obſervation* of the wiſeſt of Men, that *a ſoft anſwer turneth away wrath,* and mens *paſſions* are like *bullets* which batter the walls which ſtand inflexible, but fall harmleſly into Wool or Feathers; and I doubt not common experience will atteſt it, that none do generally fall under fewer of theſe ſtorms than they, who are thus prepar'd to bear them. Let a meek and an angry perſon caſt up their Accounts together, and compare the number of affronts and contumelies they have met with, and I believe the *odds* will be as *great,* as between *Sauls* thouſands and *Davids* ten thouſands. 'Tis certain that the return made to the firſt injury provokes a new one; men being ſo partial to themſelves, that he who receives a harm by way of *retaliation,* never reflects on his own firſt guilt, but looks on it as a naked *injury,* and ſo purſues his Revenge, which has again the ſame effect on the other, and ſo this *wild-fire* runs round, till it have ſet all in a *flame*; made the ſaddeſt vaſtations, not only in mens *minds,* but their outward *concernments* too, in the many fatal outrages, which theſe eager contentions occaſion, all which would be avoided by a meek diſregard of the firſt provocation: So that although ſome injuries may fall upon the Paſſive man, yet infallibly there would be no broils and quarrels, which are alone the great accumulators and multipliers of injuries; which alone demonſtrates how unjuſtly *meekneß* is charg'd with ſo much as an accidental

production of them; and vindicates that *precept* of *Chriſt* which has faln under ſo much, not only *cavil* but *ſcorn*; it appearing that to abſtain from revenge, and refer the hazards of that to Gods providence (which is the importance of his command to *turn the cheek*) is the greateſt even moral *ſecurity* againſt *violence*, and ſo approves our *Law-giver* (in this ſo decried particular) to be as well the *wonderful Counſellor*, as the *Prince of Peace*.

IN the next place, if we weigh the *precept* of humility and lowlineſs in the *balance* of ſober diſcourſe, we ſhall certainly find it hold a *juſt weight*. Indeed *pride* is nothing but *deceit*, a meer cheat and deluſion, and ſo every man can diſcern it in another, we *there* are able to trace the windings of this *Serpent*, and ſay *this* man thinks himſelf more wiſe, *this* more learned, a *third* more holy than he is: yet alas! in our own breaſts we diſcern not the *Abuſe*, ſuffer him to perſwade *us* what he but promis'd to our *firſt Parents*, that we are *as Gods*, ſomething ſo ſuper-excellent, that all muſt reverence and adore: And herein we take him at his word, never ſuſpect theſe glorious *Attributions* may be no more than *complement* or Flattery; or what is no leſs obvious, *deriſion* and *ſcorn*. To a conſidering man 'twould be a ſhrew'd *preſumption* againſt whatever *pride* ſuggeſts, that 'tis attended always by *ſelf-love*, which is, as it were, the *common Setter* to all thoſe cheats which circumvent and fool us: But there want not alſo more convincing proofs of its deceit and unſincerity. When e're we overween and believe well of

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our ſelves, it is in contemplation of ſome *imaginary* or elſe *real* good; ſomewhat a Man has not, or ſomewhat that he has: If we do it upon the former account, that is undeniably a groſs *deluſion*; a kind of *deceptio viſus*, a filling the Eye with phantaſtick *Aerial* Images, which have no *ſolid* Being: And God knows, ſuch *Phaſmes*, ſuch Apparitions are moſt of thoſe *excellencies* which men applaud in themſelves; things conjur'd up by the *Magick* of a ſtrong imagination, and are only ſeen within that *Circle* in which the *Enchanter* ſtands: And though *Satan* be the *grand Maſter of this black Art*, yet his *Pupils* are now grown ſo dextrous, that he ſeldom needs to be call'd in; our own partialities and fondneſſes to our ſelves, are abundantly ſufficient for the purpoſe. But if in the *ſecond* place we ſuppoſe the things to be *really* exiſtent in us, yet *pride* runs us upon an *other error* no leſs dangerous than the *former*, for it betrays us to miſtake the true *owner* of them, emboldens us to ſet our own mark upon thoſe *rich Wares*, in whoſe acqueſt we have not been ſo much as *Factors*; God is the one great Author and Proprietor of all that is or can be valuable in us; to his Providence or his Grace we owe all the accompliſhment of our outward or inward man, and though he allows us the *uſe* and benefit of them, yet the *glory* is a ſpecial *royalty*, which (as the Gold or Silver Mines of a Nation) is reſerved to his *Crown*, an incommunicable piece of his *Regality*. And how wofully does our *pride* befool us, when it brings us in ſuch falſe *Inventories*

ries of our goods, makes us dream our ſelves rich by anothers wealth; like *children* that *call every thing theirs which looks ſplendidly*, or the mad *Athenian* celebrated by *Horace* for his happy phrenſie, that *reſolv'd all the Ships and Wares his own that came into the Cities harbour*: But how more ſadly does it betray us, when it thus puts us upon the invaſion of *his* propriety, who is not as the impotent *Monarchs* of the earth, unable to aſſert his own *rights*, but can certainly *vindicate* himſelf to our *confuſion*, againſt whom no rebellion can be any longer proſperous than he willingly permits it, and who has ſolemnly avowed *he will not give his glory to another*: And when our *pride* makes us thus both ridiculous and miſerable, when it ſeduces us not only into the folly of *children* and extravagancies of *Lunaticks*, but at once into the guilt of bold, and puniſhment of improſperous *rebels*: Certainly *reaſon* can never become its *Advocate*, or put in any *demur* to that *ſentence* which excludes ſo treacherous a *gueſt* out of mens hearts; which is the ſole aim of thoſe *laws of humility* which *Chriſt* has given us.

NOR will the Precepts of *temperance* and *purity* find any *worſe doom* at this *Bar*, the contrary *vices* being ſuch indignities and contumelies unto humane nature, as can never find any *countenance* from this Supreme part of it: 'Tis the prerogative of our Reaſon, that it diſcriminates us *from*, and elevates us *above* beaſts: Nor can it ever be brought to reſign this ſo glorious a priviledge, aſſent to the admiſſion of thoſe brutiſh appetites

petites which would over-run the *Soul*, level its *ſuperior* with its *inferior* faculties; confound the diſtinction of *rational* and *ſenſitive*, and in a word, render the *Beaſt* ſo ravenous as to eat up the *Man*. Yet *thus* it is in thoſe ſordid Sins of *intemperance* and *uncleanneſs*, unleſs perhaps they are ſo much worſe than *beaſtial* that I wrong the generality of the Brutes in the compariſon, it being only ſome few of them, the very *beaſts* of the Beaſts that are guilty of any ſuch *exceſſes*; for generally their *appetites* do not tranſgreſs the *regular ends* of *nature*, they know no ſuch diſeaſe as *ſurfeiting*, but eat to ſatisfie *hunger*, and couple at ſuch ſeaſons as beſt tend to preſerve their kind; and then 'tis to be conſider'd, how baſe, how *degenerous* a deſcent it is for us to ſtoop, not only below our *own* nature, but *theirs*; what a *ſolitude* theſe vices reduce us to, that not ſo much as the nobler ſort of *beaſts* will bear us *company*; we muſt wander upon the *mountains* to court a *Goat*, we muſt rake the *mire* to find a *Swine*, before we can furniſh our ſelves with any *aſſociates*: And ſure all this ſo open an *hoſtility* againſt Reaſon, that it can by no means be her *intereſt* to abet it. Ask her whether ſhe would be *preſt to death* with *loads of meat*, whether ſhe would be *drown'd* in *floods of drink*, whether ſhe would be *ſuffocated* with the *noiſome vapours of putrefaction* and rottenneſs, and the *anſwer* ſhe gives to theſe tells you her ſenſe of *Gluttony*, *Drunkenneſs* and *Uncleanneſs*: Alas! ſhe ſuffers from them the moſt barbarous outrages, is invaded not only

in her *authority*, but her very *being*, and therefore even upon the ſo celebrated principle of ſelf-preſervation, muſt muſter all her forces to vindicate the injury and defend her ſelf. And then certainly *Chriſts Commands* of *ſobriety* and *purity* muſt needs be entertain'd with all *alacrity* and *gladneſs*, as an acceſſion of *ſtrength* to her party, an *aid* to aſſiſt her in that juſt and neceſſary *War*.

AND as *reaſon* thus pronounces againſt the ſins of the *fleſh*, ſo in the next place does it certainly againſt thoſe of the *world*. *Mammon* himſelf will not be able to bribe this *Judge*, but when *Chriſts precept* of Charity and liberality comes before this *tribunal*, it will infallibly be not only *acquitted* but *magnified* and applauded, be call'd from the *Bar* to the *Bench*, Commiſſioned like the *Jews*, *Heſt. 9. To bear rule over them that hated them*, to diſſipate at once the wealth and the covetouſneſs of the *worldling*; have the *keys* put into its hand; that it may have free acceſs to his *Coffers*; this certainly muſt be the event of this trial, for 'tis confeſſedly the part of *reaſon* to *diſpoſe* every thing to thoſe *uſes* which are moſt *proper* and *advantageous*, ſuch as may bring in moſt *real benefit* to the owner. Now what other employment of *wealth* is there (after competent accommodations are provided) which can contribute to a mans *felicity*? If it be laid out like the *rich mans* in the Goſpel *in delicious fare*, or *Purple* and *fine Linnen*; certainly it makes no leaſt approach towards it. Firſt, for exceſſive Fare, if a man be *not exceſſive* too in the eating,

eating, what does he *enjoy* of it? *Meat* has no natural propriety to the *eye*, and can make no impreſſions of pleaſure there; but if he be *voracious* and intemperate, 'tis then ſo far from making him *happy*, that it dejects him into the *forlorn condition*, even now mentioned, ſets him at odds with his *reaſon*, his very *manhood*, nay, I may add with his very *ſenſe* too; the diſplacencies that he receives by the conſequencies of his exceſs, far out-weighing all that is grateful in it. This is well deſcrib'd by the *Wiſe man*, *Eccles.* 31. 19.

AS for the *gayety of apparel*, that can never in ſober judging be thought any *advantage*; 'tis that which only *youth* and *folly* puts a value upon, and as we out-grow the one, ſo we do the other: All that is convenient in Cloaths is as well, nay, better provided for without it: A *rich ſuit* is only *heavier*, not *warmer* than a plain; and it is a kind of prodigy to ſee *how heavily vanity*, which is in itſelf ſo *light*, ſits upon ſome men; who are content even to make themſelves *Porters*, ſo their *Tailors* may lay on the *burthen*: And thus in many other inſtances the fineneſs of Cloaths deſtroys the eaſe, ſo that it often *helps* men to pain, but can never *rid* them of any; the body may be languiſhing and infirm under the moſt ſplendid cover: *Herods royal apparel* ſecures him not from being *eaten with worms*; and *Lazarus his Ulcers* would have been never the leſs *painful*, though they had been *wrapt in* Dives *his fine Linen*.

OR if the *wealth* be laid out on any other part of *that* the world calls *greatneſs*, as an *honourable*

retinue, Troops of attendants, and the like; the return will be no leſs *empty*: Multitudes of unprofitable *ſervants* being a great *burthen*, but no degree of *advantage*; alas! does my *meat* reliſh ever the better, becauſe my *table* is ſurrounded with *waiters*? Or when I go out, does my *train of followers* make the *Air* the *more refreſhing* to me, does not rather the *duſt* they raiſe make it *leſs*, annoy and ſtifle me? As for *matter of buſineſs*, the number of *ſervants* tends rather to *hinder* than *advance* it; daily experience atteſting, that in crouds of domeſticks every one of them thinks his idleneſs will be hid: The care of *doing* and the guilt of *omitting* is transferr'd from one to another, and none has any farther *thought*, than how he may *quit* himſelf either of the *burthen* or the *blame*; ſo that upon the final account all that accrues to a *Maſter* by the *greatneſs of his family* is the *encreaſe of his care* in the regiment of it: A great deal of vigilance and circumſpection being requir'd to keep it in any tolerable *order*, and if it be not ſo kept, his Houſe becomes a *wilderneſs*, and himſelf a *prey* to the Beaſts he feeds: The licentiouſneſs of the Servant redounding more ways than one to the damage of the *Maſter*.

IF we ſhould now proceed more *minutely* to every other *ſingle expence* which *vanity* and *pride* ſuggeſts, we ſhould certainly find the like ſucceſs of our inqueſt; nothing of *real felicity*, but on the contrary the *vanity* ſo interwoven and incorporate with *vexation of Spirit*, that 'tis impoſſible to ſever them: So that *thus* to employ ones riches

riches is rather to *ſuffer* than *enjoy* them; but if we ſuppoſe a man on the other ſide ſuch a *Reverer of his wealth*, that he dares not *employ* it at all, unleſs it be at the *bank*, for the bringing in of more, that keeps it as men do beaſts reſerv'd for breed, manumit them from all work but that of propagation. Such a perſon is ſurely of all others the fartheſt from receiving any advantage by it: he converts it from a *ſervant* into a *tyrant*, and ſad experience ſhews us the calamity of ſuch a tranſmutation. It has been always held the *ſevereſt treatment* of *ſlaves* and *Malefactors damnare ad Metalla*, force them to dig in Mines; now this is the *covetous mans lot*, from which he is never to expect a *releaſe*, as being his own remorſeleſs and more than *Egyptian task-maſter*: and the parallel holds too, in the gainleſneſs as well as laborioufneſs of the work; Thoſe wretched *creatures* buried in *earth* and darkneſs were never the *richer* for all the *Ore* they digg'd, no more is the *inſatiate Miſer*, he has no power to *diſpoſe* of any of his *acqueſts*; and though he calls them *his*, yet alas he *poſſeſſes* them no otherwiſe than a *priſoner* does his *Goal*, a *Mad-man* his *chains*, they are only *inſtruments* of his *thraldom*, and the getting more ſerves only to add more weight to his Shackles; and certainly *wealth* can be no way worſe diſpos'd, than thus to buy ſo baſe a *ſervitude*.

AND now ſince neither the *luxurious* ſpending, nor the *covetous* keeping can *advantage* us one ſtep towards any thing that can be call'd

happy; but do on the contrary *engage* us upon toil and *miſery*: *Wealth* ſeems to be a very oppreſſive *burthen*, ſuch as we can neither *caſt off*, nor ſafely *bear*; and truly ſo it is till *charity* comes into our Aid; which as the proper *element of wealth*, renders that *light* which gravitates elſewhere, and as the *Elixir* unto *Metals* transforms them into *Gold*, ſtamps *purity* and *price* upon them: by freely giving, endows the *donor* with what ever he beſtows; enriches *him*, and what is more, enriches *wealth* itſelf. Without this *art of uſing*, and diſpoſing our eſtates, we are thoſe *Indians* who change their Gold for Glaſs: that ſilly *Fiſher-man*, who having found a *maſs of Ambergreece*, employed it to the *liquoring of his boots*; are fooliſh to the height of *Midas* in the Fable, who being promis'd to have what ever he would *wiſh*, made his *demand* that every thing he toucht might preſently be Gold, and run the hazard that he did of being *ſtarv'd* by our unhappy affluence: Men ſay indeed that *Gold by preparation* becomes a *ſoveraign cordial*, but certainly it never does rejoyce the heart ſo much as when Charity is the *Chymiſt*; the *poor mans hand* is the beſt *Limbeck* to extract this *Magiſtery* and *tinfture*, the *flames of love* will really perform thoſe *miracles*, they of the Furnace boaſt of; and would they employ themſelves in this *laboratory*, they would find the *omnipotent efficacy* they dream of, ſooner in this way of *diſſipating*, than in all their *arts*, or rather Fancies of generating Gold. 'Tis certainly a moſt generous and enlivening pleaſure which re-

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ſults from a *ſeaſonable liberality*: When I ſee a man ſtrugling with *want*, his very ſpirit as well as body ſtooping under the preſſure; if I then relieve him, the *humane nature* within me which is common to us both, does by a kind of *Sympathetick motion* exult and raiſe up itſelf, but if I have any *piety* that muſt do it much more; for as the *former* ſhew'd me *my own image* in my poor *brother*, ſo *this* ſhews me *Gods*; and how tranſcendent a ſatisfaction muſt it be, to have thus reſcued him who bears ſo divine an impreſs, to have paid ſome part of *gratitude* to my Creator for my own *being*, by making my ſelf in my low ſphere the giver or preſerver of that life, which he firſt breath'd into another. *This*, and this only is the *way* to raiſe a *felicity* out of *wealth*; and ſurely ſince the attaining of *happineſs* is the one grand *purſuit* of our *reaſon*, that muſt even before it has ſubjected itſelf to the *faith of Chriſt*, give aſſent to the *prudence of his command* in *this* as well as the *former* inſtances.

BUT there remains a *precept* of our *Saviours* allied to this; which ſeems by no means to *comport* and *hold a correſpondence* with the dictates of *right reaſon*; the *taking up the croſs*, and *ſuffering for righteouſneſs ſake*; which contradicts the fundamental law of ſelf-preſervation; and the great end of being, felicity and happineſs. But this *ſuggeſtion*, how ſpecious ſoever it appear, is utterly *fallacious*; for 'tis no good conſequence, that becauſe *reaſon* aims at our being *happy*, therefore it forbids us all *voluntary ſufferings*, ſince

that the caſe may be ſo ſet, that *ſuch a ſuffering* may be the *faireſt medium* left us to our *happineſs*. 'Tis a known rule, that *of two evils, the leaſt is to be choſen*; and the election of the leſſer ill, though it be no *abſolute*, yet is a *comparative* good; and its *attainment* as far as the neceſſity of our affairs permit, is our *felicity*: and reaſon can provide no farther. Now this is the eſtate of the preſent inſtance: *two evils* are propos'd, a *natural* and a *moral*; the Natural, though in its ſelf to be averted, yet much inferiour to the Moral, and then *reaſon* ſoon reſolves the *Dilemma*, that the *natural is to be choſen*: All that can be queſtion'd in this affair, is *whether reaſon define the moral evil to be the greater*, but this can bear no long diſpute with any who conſider but the *nature of reaſon*, which being ſeated in the *upper ſoul* of a man, is no way concern'd in thoſe *ills*, which make their impreſſion on the *ſenſitive part*, but *moral* ills ſtrike higher, invade the *mind*, cloud the *reaſon*; nay, often depoſe it from its regiment, as is too frequently exemplified in the force of vitious habits, and therefore by howmuch our *reaſon* is ſuperior to our *ſenſe*, ſo much are thoſe to be accounted the *greateſt evils*, which aſſault that *nobler part* of us. This certainly will now be the *determination* of Reaſon, if ſhe may be permitted the freedom of her vote: for thus was it formerly, where ſhe bare the moſt ſway, and uncontrouled rule; the wiſeſt and beſt conſidering of *humane*, as well as *divine Authors* having eſtabliſht it as an undoubted *Aphoriſm*,

ciſm, that *honeſt is to be preferr'd before both gainful and pleaſant*: ſo that nothing renders a man ſo *deplorable*, as that which violates his *integrity*; nay they have generally gone higher, exhorted men to *become voluntiers in vertues warfare, not to ſuſpend their ſufferings, till they were forc't out by the competition of a crime; but offer themſelves free oblations.* Thus to ſuffer for ones *countrey* or ones *friend*, was thought ſo *worthy*, ſo *heroick* a thing, that *noble* and *ingenuous ſpirits* were *æmulous* of it: and it was ſo ſtated a caſe that *Epictetus* forbids a man, on ſuch an occaſion to conſult with the *Oracle*, whether he ſhould do it or no, it being *neceſſary* to be done, what ever ill ſucceſs or ruine be predicted, ὅτε ὁ θάνατος σημαίνεται, ἢ τήρωσις μέρους σώματος, ἢ φυγὴ, and how ſerious they were in theſe *perſwaſions*, ſome of them have *practically* evidenced, as having *ſuffered* very conſiderable preſſures, nay *death* itſelf, rather than they would bow to the *prædominant vices* of their Age, or omit the occaſion of *eminent vertue*. *Ariſtides* would be juſt in ſpight of the *Oſtraciſm*. *Regulus* obſervant of his *oath* made to a *faithleſs enemy*, though *death* and *torment* attended the *performance*. *Lycurgus* to perpetuate to his Citizens the benefit of his *good Laws*, as ſubtilly deſigns *perpetual baniſhment* unto himſelf, as others uſe to contrive for *honour* and for *empire* there. *Codrus* redeems the ſafety of his *army* with his own *death*: *Curtius* makes himſelf a *Martyr* for his *countrey*, and *Socrates* in the ſtricter ſenſe becomes one for his *God*: laid down his *life* in atteſtation

teſtation of that moſt *fundamental truth* and leading *article of Faith*, πιστεύειν εἰς ἕνα θεὸν, the *belief* of *one God*. And yet we find not that *thoſe times*, which were ſo *ill* as to ſhed his *bloud*, were yet ſo *bad* as to defame his *memory*, he's not recorded either as *fool* or *hypocondriack*; nor have his *ſufferings* ſtruck him out of the liſt of *Philoſophers*: but he ſtands there the more conſpicuouſly in thoſe *bloudy characters*; and however the credit of the *Oracle* may be otherwiſe diſparaged, it never was on this account, that it had declared *Socrates* to be the *wiſeſt of men*. And yet both he and the reſt, had either *none*, or very *imperfect* confus'd apprehenſions of a future *reward*, when they engaged on preſent Suffering, and death itſelf: So that we might be tempted to imagine, that ſome ſtrange change and *tranſmutation* has now befaln *vertue*, that it has put on ſo much a *diſtant* appearance from its *ancient* ſelf, that the acceſſion of new obligations, and higher hopes, ſhould abſolve, avert and utterly diſpirit us; inſomuch that what was Conſtancy in a *Heathen*, ſhould be Folly in a *Chriſtian*. Certainly this is a *Metamorphoſis* of our own making, we look through deforming *optick-glaſſes*, ſuch as our *avarice* or effeminate *ſenſualities* convey into our hands, which give not only *ſtrange* and gaſtly, but withall *ridiculous ſhapes*; but if we would conſult our *reaſon*, that would ſhew us things in their *proper forms*. Vertue and Reaſon are both the ſame they were ſo many hundred years ago, and where the *object* and the

the *faculty* admit of no *mutation*, 'tis impoſſible there ſhould really be any ſuch *variable appearance*. If *Socrates* were ſo zealous for the *one God*, that he choſe rather to relinquiſh his *life*, than to conſent to, or but connive at the *profane rivalry of Polytheiſme*, and yet be no Fool; certainly we may as ſecurely tranſcribe his copy: and though the particular Article may not be the ſame; yet if it be any thing wherein vertue is concern'd, the cauſe is no leſs warrantable: He that ſuffers for a *practical* Point, is no more a prodigal of his pains, than he that lays them out on the higheſt *ſpeculative*. The *Commandments* may have as good *Martyrs* as the *Creed*; for the ſame *authority* has requir'd our *obedience* to the *one*, that exacts our *faith* of the *other*. Nor is there any neceſſity of *Heathen* or *Jewiſh* Tribunal, to convert our ſufferings to *Martyrdom*; we may receive that crown from the hands of thoſe that own the ſame faith with us. Thoſe that ſay with the moſt ſeeming vehemence *let the Lord be glorified*, may yet hate and caſt out their brethren for his name ſake, *Iſa.* 66. 5. He that tells me I fear not *God ſo much* as he, may yet perſecute me for honouring the *King more*; and my *bloud* pour'd out upon that account, becomes an *acceptable ſacrifice* to him, who has commanded my Subjection to the *higher Powers*. He who calls Chriſt his *head*, may yet rend and tear his Body; and if I love its communion ſo well, as to take my ſhare in the *Maſſacre*, I approach toward that dignity and comfort S. *Paul* ſo glories in,

in, of *filling up that which is behind, of the afflictions of Chriſt in my fleſh, for his bodies ſake which is the Church, Col.* 1. 24. He that mulcts the more *indeliberate* Oaths, may yet enjoyn a ſolemn Perjury: and if I chuſe he ſhould rather make havock of my *goods* than my Conſcience; my *ſpoils* become not more monuments of his *rapine*, than my *piety*; they plead my *innocence* before him who *will not hold him guiltleſs that taketh his name in vain*: and how profanely ſoever my *wealth* is diſpos'd by him that ſeizes it, 'tis accounted to me as caſt into the *treaſury*; and ſo 'tis poſſible I may at once vie with the *rich-men* in the greatneſs of the oblation, and with the *poor Widow* too in that higher circumſtance of its being all. In ſum, the opportunities of *Martyrdom* are not reſtrained to thoſe points wherein *Chriſtians* differ from *Jews* or *Heathens*, but extend to all wherein we Chriſtians differ from our rule, the commands of our bleſſed Maſter. If I ſuffer for my *conſtancy* to any of them, I have certainly my place in *Gods Martyrology*, as well as if I had faln under any of the *ten Perſecutions*. God was not ſo partial to the *primitive Chriſtians* as to allow them the *Monopoly* and encloſure of that dignity; if *they* as our *elder brethren* had a *double portion*, yet there is ſtill a *childs part* left for every one of us, enough to teſtifie our *legitimation*, and ſecure us from the brand of *baſtardy, Heb.* 12. 'Twas S. *Pauls* indefinite Affirmation, and all times ſince have born witneſs to the truth of it; That *all that will live godly in Chriſt*

Chriſt Jeſus ſhall ſuffer perſecution. Some *unfaſhionable vertues* there have been in every Age, which have whetted, if not the *Swords*, yet the *Tongues* of men: and thoſe that happen not to fall under *Abels* perſecution, muſt not hope to eſcape that of *Iſaac*: if they meet with no *Cain* to *kill*, they will undoubtedly with an *Iſhmael* to *mock* them. But in what dreſs ſoever our *ſufferings* appear, a *good cauſe* diveſts them of their *frightful ſhape*, pulls off the *ugly vizard*, and ſhews us a *beauty* that lay there conceal'd; and that not only to the Eye of our *faith* but our *reaſon* too. *Fortitude* was a *vertue* before *Chriſtianity* had a name in the world; and the very inſtinct of our *nature whiſpers* within us, the *baſeneſs* of being baffled out of a Truth or Vertue; yet ſuch a deſpicable *coward*, is every man that wants this *paſſive valour*, without which the *active* muſt find another name; Rage or Phrenſie it may be, in ſome perhaps natural *courage*, or ſanguineneſs of temper in others, but true Valor it is not, if it knows not as well to *ſuffer* as to *do*. That *mind* is truly great, and only that which ſtands above the *power* of all *extrinſick violence*; which keeps itſelf a diſtinct *principality* independent upon the outward man, ſo that it is not ſubjected to its fate; that can be *free*, when the body is faſt *bound* in Miſery and Iron, *ſound* and *healthy*, when that *groans* under torture, and is never more *ſtrong* and *vital*, than when that *languiſhes* and *expires*; and this is ſo deſirable, ſo tranſcendent a *priviledge*, as *reaſon* cannot but *aſpire to*: and this is

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it to which this excellent *precept* of Chriſt advances us when we thus *ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake*, our Minds are all *light*, what *darkneſs* ſoever involve our exterior part, and is like *Goſhen* exempt and ſecure, when that falls under all the Plagues of *Ægypt*.

AND what reaſon thus embraces for itſelf, 'tis not imaginable that it ſhould reject, becauſe 'tis richly clad; that the Race ſhould ſeem the more tedious, becauſe there is a Crown within view; or that the glorious *rewards* our Chriſtianity propoſes to our conſtancy, ſhould be eſteemed as *menaces* and *threats*, Temptations to deſert or turn Apoſtates. No certainly, Reaſon cannot diſpute, and make an *inference* ſo utterly *illogical*, but will rather uſe it as an *enforcement* of its former *concluſion*, eſtabliſh it the more firm and immovable by having the *baſis* thus enlarged, having *reward* added to *vertue*, and *happineſs* entail'd on *duty*. If in the competition between two Evils, *reaſon* pronounce the *leſſer eligible*: Much more will ſhe reſolve, when the conteſt is 'twixt *good and evil*, the greateſt Evil and the greateſt Good; and chuſe that *excellence* which though *ſuperlative* in itſelf, is more endear'd and heightned by *compariſon*. If I violate my *reaſon*, if I renounce *vertue*, though bare and naked, then ſurely I do it yet more when ſhe is thus *accompliſht* and adorn'd; when *beautified* on purpoſe to allure the *eye*, and take the *heart*. When over and above the poſitive donation of Happineſs, ſhe adds a reſcue and releaſe from *miſery*, and equally

equally obliges by the distant prospects of a Hell and Heaven. So that not only the *Gospel-promises*, but even *menaces* and *threats* become a *weapon* in the hand of *reason*, when she stands upon her *guard*, and fights for *vertue*. If *sin* present itself as my *Protector* from a *temporal* Calamity, *reason* will tell me hence, that the profer is insidious, it exposes me to that which is *infinitely worse* than what it pretends to save me from; and that not only in the former respect of Guilt, but in that of Punishment also. What a cheat is it to keep me out of the *dungeon*, and send me to the *bottomless pit*, to save me from a *temporary fire*, and thereby mark me out as Fuel for *eternal flames*; to take me out of *their hands* who can *kill the body*, to put me into *his* who can *destroy both soul and body in Hell*? *Reason* tells me I am to abhor the *turpitude* and *foulness* of a Crime; and it tells me too, I am to dread the *misery* and Smart of it also. It would not have me wallow in the *mire*, though it were *safe*, much less when it is full of *Asps* and *Vipers*, which will infallibly sting me to death. It cries out with *Joseph*, *How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God*? And it cries out with *Esay* too, *Who can dwell with everlasting fire*? In a word, by the domestick native *light* of the *candle of the Lord* set up within our *breast* it shews the uglineſs of *sin*; and shews it too by the affrightful dismal *blaze* of those *unquenchable flames* it kindles: Thus by the different *arguments* of terror and endearment, of love and fear, of interest and duty, *reason* asserts this

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ſcorn'd, decried, neglected *precept*: Take her as mere *Paynim* abſtracting from the expectation of reward or puniſhment; or take her as a *Proſelyte* to Chriſt, contemplating his promiſes and threats, if there be *honeſty*, or if there be *religion*, in either inſtance the Soul muſt ſtill conclude, that *Affliction is to be choſen rather than Iniquity*.

AND if it be reaſonable thus to *reſiſt even unto bloud ſtriving againſt ſin*, if *reaſon* blow the *trumpet*, ſound the *alarm* to this ſolemn *War*, then ſurely it preſcribes ſomething of *Martial diſcipline* to prepare and diſpoſe us for thoſe *combats*. No expert *General* will bring a company of raw untrain'd men into the *field*, but will by little bloudleſs skirmiſhes inſtruct them in the manner of the *fight*, teach them the ready managery of their *weapons*; and of this ſort are all thoſe *voluntary ſelf-denials*, and lighter auſterities which Chriſtianity commends to us, which become neceſſary not ſimply for themſelves, but as inſtruments towards a higher end. The Military fame the *Romans* had in the world was atchieved by the exact diſcipline of their Camps, enuring their Souldiers to labour and hardſhip. And, as *Tacitus* tells us, when a *long peace* had ſlackned the reins of diſcipline, that *active humour*, which was wont to be ſpent on the Enemy, recoil'd, and flew in the face of their Commanders, begat nothing but *mutinies* and diſorders; and certainly 'twill be the ſame in our *Chriſtian warfare*, if we abandon our ſelves to Eaſe and Sloth, never attempt to wreſtle with a difficulty, but

but keep our ſelves in the poſture the *Iſraelites* Camp was in at *Moſes*'s deſcent from the Mount, *eating and drinking, and riſing up to play*; our appetites will grow licentious and inſolent, paſt our controul and guidance. If we treat them with ſuch an indulgence as is recorded of *David* to *Adoniah*, never ſay ſo much as *why haſt thou done thus*? 'Tis not to be expected but they will Rebel, though a *Solomon* ſit in the *Throne*. For alas, how is it imaginable, that he who never denied himſelf any the *ſmalleſt* or *moſt trifling pleaſure* he had a mind to, ſhall on a ſudden deny *all in the groſs*? He who has projected *many*, but never wav'd *one* Opportunity of ſhewing his *wit*, how ſhall he find in his heart to become a *fool for Chriſt*? He that has gratified his *palate* with all that pretends to be guſtful to it, how ſhall he deſcend to the *bread of affliction*? Or he that never tried to miſs a Meal, how will he entertain the unwelcome contrariety of not knowing where to get one? He who has never abated any thing of the utmoſt *pomp* he could reach, how will he brook the *want* of *neceſſaries*; or from his Houſe ſeil'd with *Cedar*, and painted with *Vermilion*, be content with his *Saviours* Lot, *not to have where to lay his head*? In ſhort, how ſhall he who never could pare off any of the *excreſcencies*, the mere *vanities* and *gaieties* of an eſtate, part with it *all*; or lay down that *life for Chriſts ſake*, from which he never ſubſtracted one ſmalleſt *pleaſure*? *Suffering* is a thing to which the *ſenſitive* part of us has an Innate *averſion*, and Averſions are not to

be ſubdued at once, but by gentle and eaſie *degrees*; and cuſtom muſt have introduc'd a ſecond nature, before that original part of our temper will be ſupplanted. As 'tis therefore highly reaſonable for every man to aſpire to the *dominion* of himſelf, to keep his *affections* within his own *power* and *command*; and though he have no *intereſt* at-all in the *greater*, enjoy a ſoveraignty in the *leſſer* World: So in order to that, 'tis as reaſonable to diſcipline and tame them by ſome voluntary *acts* of *reſtraint*, like *Hannibal*, ſometimes to *paſs by that water to which his thirſts do moſt importunately invite him*. To try by little *skirmiſhes* what ſtrength and skill he has, before he runs the fatal hazard of a *battel*. To deny himſelf in the leſſer inſtances, that ſo when the greater come, they may not have the *diſadvantage* of Uncouthneſs and perfect Strangeneſs to enhanſe their *difficulty*; and this muſt certainly be acknowledg'd *reaſonable*, or elſe we muſt condemn almoſt all the receiv'd *rules* of *humane tranſactions*, which generally have this for their *ground-work*, that men muſt paſs through the *firſt principles* and *loweſt rudiments* of any Art, before they can arrive at its height. Men ſerve *Apprentiſhips* to Trades, and think not themſelves the firſt day *Maſters* of their craft; we advance in *learning* by leiſurable and ſlow ſteps, and skip not from the *A B C* to the *Metaphyſicks*: And certainly the skill of *Chriſtian ſuffering* is not the eaſieſt of all *Trades* or *Sciences*; but will require ſome time of *Initiation*, many repeated Trials and Eſſays to bring us into

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an acquaintance with it: To convince our *understandings*, and perſwade our *wills*, that *to loſe our lives is to ſave them*; and *to be faithful unto the death*, is the beſt way *to gain a Crown of life*.

IF I ſhould now proceed to every other *precept* of Chriſt, and examine it by the *rules* of *ſober diſcourſe*, we ſhould infallibly find them ſo rational as befits the Laws of *him* who is the *eternal reaſon*; but having made theſe *eſſays* in ſome of the moſt oppos'd Inſtances, I ſhall preſume theſe may paſs as the *repreſentatives* of *all* the reſt; and the acquittal theſe have receiv'd at the Tribunal of Reaſon virtually involve them all.

AND now ſince both *conſcience* and *reaſon* have pronounc'd the ſame of Chriſts *Laws*, that *Pilate* did of his *Perſon*, that *they find in them no fault at all*; methinks *Judges* ſhould have the ſame *priviledge* that is allowed to *private Men*, that *in the mouth of two every word may be eſtabliſht*: But if any man be ſo ſcrupulous as not to reſt in the ſentence of *leſs* than a *Triumvirate*, let him *in Gods name* bring in a *third*, and when his vicious *appetites* (which were before excepted to as parties) are ſet aſide, he cannot be diſtracted in his *choice*, there being but *one* more that can poſſibly be call'd in, and that is *experience*, which being a *Judge* that himſelf muſt create, he can not fear it ſhould be prejudic'd againſt him; ſo that he may entertain full confidence of its *integrity*: And no leſs may he do of its *ability*, this being the moſt infallible of humane determinations, ſuch as often corrects the *error* of *ſpeculati-*

on; and ſhews us the vanity of *concluding* what is *practicable in matter* from being *demonſtrated in the Scheme* or *Diagram*; The *guidance* of an *illeterate traveller* in the way that he has gone, being far more uſeful to a *ſtranger* in his journey, than the beſt *Maps* and moſt exact *deſcriptions* of *Geographers*. But then it muſt be indeed *experience*, and not only ſome ſlight and tranſient Eſſay. We call not him an *experienc'd Phyſician* that has had *one Patient*, or a *Lawyer* that has pleaded *one Cauſe*. *Experience* is the *daughter* of *time*, and is made up of many *ſucceſſive trials*, as a *habit* is of *multiplied acts*: And to the *verdict* of ſuch an Experience Chriſts *precepts* will not fear to *ſtand*; let a man put himſelf into a ſetled courſe of *obedience* to them, abſtain ſo long from all *prohibited commiſſions*, as may wear out the *rank taſte* wherewith his *palate* has been ſeaſon'd and leave it free and diſengag'd, and then infallibly he will find ſuch a *ſavor* and *ſweetneſs* in thoſe *vertues*, that he will wonder how he came to be cheated into an *opinion* of their being *bitter* and *unſavoury*; and will have no *appetite* to *return to his Onions and his Garlick*, after he has thus been fed with *Quails* and *Manna*. That this will be the *event* of this *experiment* there is all *ground of certainty*, and when the *trial* is once made, ſo irrefragable an *evidence* will follow, that it will not leave a man the *power to doubt*: Only in the *interim* ſo much *belief* is requiſite, as may let him into the *demonſtration*, make him ſet to *that* Practice from whence he is to reap all *this*: And if any

any man be ſo much a *Sceptick*, as not to have *faith* enough to put him on the *adventure*, I ſhould at once for his *conviction* and *puniſhment*, wiſh but that he might a while extend the ſame *diſtruſt* to Affairs of *common life*: Let him doubt whether his *meat* be ſavory, and *refuſe to eat*; whether his *cloaths* be warm, and ſo *go naked*; whether his *houſe* be firm, and *lye without doors*: and when he has a while thus ſmarted under his own *diſcipline*, let him but apply the *wiſdom* he has thus bought to the preſent *inſtance*, and it will unqueſtionably reſolve his *ſcruple*; or if he be ſtill too Impatient to attend the ripening of his own Experience, let him make uſe of other mens. Let him appeal to any who has inur'd his *neck* to Chriſts *yoke*, and ask him whether it be *galling* and *pinching*, or whether it be not *eaſie*, nay *gracious*. Let him ask one who by repeated reſtraints hath ſubdued and tamed his *natural rage* or *pride*, how he likes the *change*, and undoubtedly he will tell him, 'tis no leſs *happy* than a *calm* is after the noiſe and danger of a violent *tempeſt*, or the eaſe of a broken *impoſthume*, after the painful gathering and filling of it. Let him ask one who has diveſted himſelf of all his *ſenſual ſins*, whether by their *abſence* he now diſcern not their *neceſſity*, and he will tell them, 'tis but the ſame the *primitive Chriſtians* had of thoſe *beaſts skins* wherein their *perſecutors* had clad them, whoſe only uſe was by *deforming* to fit them for *devouring*. Let him come to the converted *Mammoniſt*, and ask him, which he finds the better *treaſury*, his *own* Coffer

or the poor mans Bowels, and he will be able to aſſure him, he is become *much richer* by having *leſs in ſtore*. Let him come to the devout *Aſcetick*, and ask him what *taſte* he finds in *Daniels* unpleaſant *bread*, *Dan.* 10. 3. and he will tell him *infinitely more* than ever he did in *Dives's delicious fare*; that cloy'd and ſurfeited the fleſh, this nouriſhes and ſupports the ſpirit. Nay finally, let him come to him that is actually *ſuffering for righteouſneſs ſake*, and he will exemplifie to him the *beatitude* which Chriſt has pronounc'd of ſuch: Let him viſit *Paul* and *Silas* in the *priſon*, and he ſhall hear them *ſinging*: *Peter* and the other *Apoſtles* after their *ſtripes* and beating, and he ſhall find them *rejoycing*; And *Stephen* amidſt the Throng of his *murderers* and Tempeſt of their *ſtones*, and he ſhall obſerve him overlooking them all, and entertaining himſelf with a more *pleaſant proſpect*, ſeeing the *Heavens open'd and Jeſus ſtanding at the right hand of God*; and why ſhould not other mens ſucceſſes animate our endeavours here? In temporal affairs it ſeldom miſſes to do it. The Trophies of *Miltiades* at *Marathon* diſturb'd *Themiſtocles* his ſleeps, till he had rais'd unto himſelf and Country more glorious ones at *Salamine*; *Cæſar* while he views *Alexanders* Image upbraids his own ſlackneſs with the memory of his conqueſts, and inſpirits himſelf to great attempts. He that returns with a *rich fraight* from a *new-found-Land* encourages others to Trade *thither* alſo: Nay, even a *begger* ſpeeds not well at an *Hoſpitable door*, but he is able to ſend *ſholes* upon

on the like hopes: Much leſs does he that has found a *treaſure* need to uſe his *Oratory* to invite *partakers*; and why then ſhould thoſe *few* that have made this more precious *diſcovery* be forc'd to *monopolize* it, as not being able to *draw in partners?* Yet God knows, thus it is, thoſe that hear of no *rarity* but they long for it, as *David* after the waters of *Bethlehem*, can yet hear the ſame *David* cry out, *how ſweet the Lord is!* and yet have no curioſity to taſte it: Thoſe whom the very name of *Liberty* ſo captivates, that they ſacrifice all that is really valuable to that *Chimæra*; can hear the *Apoſtle* ſpeak of the *glorious liberty of the ſons of God*, and yet like hardened *Gally-ſlaves* deſpiſe the *Manumiſſion*. Thoſe that hunt after *pleaſures* till the very *purſuit* become an unſupportable *pain*, can be told of thoſe *rivers of pleaſures* wherewith God offers to quench their thirſt, and yet inflict on themſelves the *rich mans torment*, and deny ſo much as to *dip the tip of their finger* toward the *cooling* their own *flames*. Good God! what ſtrange *infatuation* is this, that while there is ſo much of *vicious envy* in the world, there ſhould be nothing of *vertuous emulation?* That mens heat and vigour ſhould all ſpend itſelf in childiſh purſuits, and leave them thus cold and ſtupid to their great and *ſerious* concernments? And what remains to him that ponders this *Epidemick* folly, but to breath out *Moſes*'s Wiſh; *O that men were wiſe*; or if that be too hopeleſs a vote, *O that men were not ſo deſtructively fooliſh*; that their raſhneſs and Error might be confin'd to

their lower intereſts: And as *fools* are treated, *be kept from dealing in things of conſequence*; that they would not govern their Souls by ſuch an abſurd kind of managery, as they will not truſt with the meaneſt of their outward concerns. And if this might but be obtain'd, if this *fatal Oſcitancy* which has benumm'd and frozen them were but *caſt off*, they would then from the report of the *good land* be animated to their *journey*; and rather chuſe to make the concurrent Teſtimonies of others arguments to encourage them, than *leave* them as Hand-writings to *appeal*, or Witneſſes to *condemn* them. And he that ſhall thus borrow other mens *experience* with this *deſign* of *copying it out*, and lays it as a foundation for his own, thereby poſſeſſes himſelf of one of the greateſt *advantages* of the *communion of Saints*; kindles himſelf at their *fire* till he grows bright and high as it; combines his *flame* with theirs, and ſo encreaſes the Ardors of them both; follows Example till himſelf grows exemplary, and in one Act *receives* and *gives*. But he that thus ſets out, muſt remember, that it is more than the journey of one day he has to go; he muſt not think (as I ſaid before) that every little *ſuperficial attempt* is that Experience which he is in queſt of: He that thus phanſies will be expos'd to a very dangerous deceit, for 'tis ſure there is in all *habits* ſuch a *force*, that they are not to be diſpoſſeſt but by a contrary violence, and therefore he that has been under the power of any vicious *cuſtom*, enters at firſt into a ſtate of *hoſtility*, has ſuch a tough *oppoſition*,

as

as rather finds him Work than Pleaſure: Now if he ſhall upon this firſt Eſſay pronounce, he is like to paſs a very *unjuſt ſentence*: Let him fight on a while till he have got ſome ground, and then though the War afforded him *little* pleaſure, the Victory will yield him *much*. Every repeated defeat he gives his Adverſary will be a new triumph to him, and what the *Romans* courted as ſo great a Dignity, he may every day *enjoy*. But then as he advances farther to the completing of his *victories*, ſo he does of his Pleaſures too: when his irregular *appetites* are ſo ſubdued, that they rarely make *inſurrection*, this is ſuch a ſtate of *tranquillity* as gives him leiſure to diſcern, and enjoy the delights of Chriſtian vertue, and will teach him to reproach the higheſt *Panegyrick* he ever heard of it as flat and imperfect: ſo infinitely will he find it exceed the utmoſt *deſcription*, that he will ſay with the Queen of *Sheba*, *the one half was not told him*. This is the rich prize which they ſhall obtain that *run* the race, but it is not awarded to the *firſt ſtep*; and hence it is ſo many fail of it, that when they find the uneaſineſs which attends the breaking off a *cuſtom*; this is ſuch a *Gyant*, a ſon of *Anak*, as turns them back diſcourag'd from the *Canaan* they went to view. But alas this diſcovers how ſmall a ſtock of Reſolution they carried out with them; for where men ſet out with *heart* and *appetite*, 'tis not ſuch little *difficulties* that will diſmay them: if it be but their *ſports* they are engag'd in, it ſerves to deceive the ſenſe of many uneaſineſſes, nay often dangers,

dangers, he that is but in chaſe of a ſilly *Hare* is ſo keen upon it, that he feels not the wearineſs of a whole days motion, and if he meet with a *hedge* in his way will rather leap it with *hazard*, than be diverted from his Game. But 'tis ſure in their ſins they ſuffer far greater hardſhips without diſcouragement. The puny *drunkard* is not diſheartned by the *firſt qualm*, but repeats his *exceſſes* till he have overcome his *queaſineſs*. The caſt *Litigant* ſits not down with one *croſs verdict*, but recommences his *ſuit*, paſſes it through all *Courts*, and conſiders not his own *pains*, ſo he may either weary or force the other out of his *right*. The *unclean perſon* falls not out with his ſin, how ſadly ſoever it hath macerated him, but ſteps out of the *hot-houſe* into the *Stews*; and ſhall men be ſo indefatigable in their purſuits of *infelicity*, buy one *torment* with another, and drive on the year in a circle of ſuch woful Traffick, and ſhall *vertue* and *pleaſure* be thought not worth the ſmalleſt *labour*? Can they keep themſelves in a *perpetual contention* with their *eaſe*, their *reaſon*, and their *God*; and can they not endure a ſhort *combat* with a ſinful *cuſtom*? Which if it have ſome *uneaſineſs*, yet 'tis both infinitely ſhort of what they have ſuffered in the contrary compliance, and beſides carries its *remedy* in its hand: For if the Difficulty ariſe only (as doubtleſs it does) from the confirm'dneſs of the Habit, every Act of reſiſtance, as it weakens the Habit, ſo it abates the Difficulty. It is therefore a moſt *unreaſonable inference*, from the *trouble* of the firſt oppoſition,

tion, to conclude the *impoſſibility* of the future; for if the *firſt* were but troubleſome and not impoſſible, the *ſecond* will have yet leſs of the trouble, and ſo be yet farther remov'd from impoſſibility, and the *third* than the *ſecond*, and ſo on till the difficulty vaniſh and diſappear. And if men would but aſſume ſuch a *moderate courage*, as but to *keep the field*, and not to run away upon the firſt gun-ſhot, they would ſoon find how impotent *Aſſailants* they had to deal with, who can never ſubdue any man by *ſtrength*, who is not firſt Emaſculated by his own *fears*. Let us therefore to ſhun the reproach of ſo diſhonorable a Defeat, awake and rouſe our ſelves, put us in a *poſture* of *defence*: And *Satan*, who is as cowardly as any thing in the world but we, *will*, as St. *James* aſſures us, *fly from us*. Let us upbraid our ſelves with our unſeaſonable hardineſs and reſolution in our impieties, till we have chang'd the *ſcene*, grow impatient of thoſe *ſervile drudgeries*, and ambitious of theſe *honourable adventures*. And to animate us the more, let us fix our *eyes* upon the glorious *prize* of the *victory*; and that not only the *final* and *eternal* in future Glory; but that *intermediate* which offers itſelf as the *earneſt* of *That*, the calm and pleaſure of a conquering piety. The *Roman* ſtory tells us, that the *Flavianiſts* had ſo poſſeſt their minds with the *ſpoils* of *Vienna*, that they grew inſenſible of all *dangers* in the way to it, and even forc't their General *Antonio* to put them upon thoſe hazards, which his wiſer conduct would have declin'd. And why ſhould

ſhould not our more worthy *hopes* excite as great an earneſtneſs? Why ſhould not we have as great an *appetite* to the pillaging of *Satans camp*, plundering that infernal *Magazeen* of all its *engins* both of *mine* and *battery*, its ſtores of *arms* and *ammunition*, leaving him naked and defenceleſs, unable to make any impreſſion upon us? And this he certainly does, who by a ſteddy *practice of vertue*, comes to diſcern the *contemptibleneſs* of thoſe baits wherewith he allures us. He that ſeeks only the *praiſe* of *God*, looks upon the *applauſe* of *men* as a blaſt of Air, which poſſibly may demoliſh and deſtroy a *glorious building*, but cannot give *foundation* or *materials* to it; and therefore will not ſeek for, or ſolicit its unhappy courtſhips. He who deſires to be *great* only *in the Kingdom of Heaven*, laughs at the buſie *aſpirings to ſecular greatneſs*, and wonders at the force of that *enchantment*, which engages men with ſo extreme toil, to climb a tottering *pinnacle*, where the ſtanding is uneaſie, and the fall deadly. He that covets to be *rich towards God*, and has inur'd his eyes to that *divine ſplendor* which reſults from the *beauty* of *holineſs*, is not dazled with the *glittering ſhine* of *Gold*: conſiders it as a *vein* of the ſame *earth* he treads on, and deſpiſes that abſurd *partiality* whereof the Prophet accuſes *idolaters*, to employ one part to the meaneſt uſes, and fall down to the other. In a word, he that looks on the *eternal things that are not ſeen*, will through thoſe *opticks* exactly diſcern the *vanity* and *inconſiderableneſs* of all that is *viſible*

visible and *temporary*; and so will be equally unmoved with the terrors or allurements of the world, and neither frighted nor flatter'd out of his duty. And he that is thus fortified discourages and wearies out his Tempter, deprives him not only of *weapons* but of *heart* too, and drives even *Satan* himself to desperation; and when the Enemy is thus beat out of the *field*, there remains nothing but to enjoy the *victory*. When that *reluctance* and *resistance* of the *corrupt appetite* is so weakned and subdued, that a man acts with *freedom*, he acts with *pleasure* too. A *heart* thus *set at liberty*, alacriously *runs the ways of Gods commandments*: it faring with *it* as with a *Patient* that is prescrib'd *exercise* for *health*; who at first perhaps finds *lassitude* and *trouble* in it: but when the *obstructions* are remov'd, and *nature* disburthened of those *noxious humors* that encumbred her, that which was at first his *task*, becomes his *recreation*. For we are not to think, that it is any *innate harshness* in *piety* that renders the first *essays* of it unpleasant; that is owing only to the *indisposedness* of our own Hearts. We are in the Prophets phrase *bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke*; and if we be galled and fretted by it, 'tis because of our impatient strivings, and irregular motions under it, the yoke is really no heavier than it is afterwards, when it is more tamely born; and yet the Ease is very different and unequal. And this teaches us a short way to that felicity we now speak of, to wit, That we compose our selves to such a submiss and malleable temper

temper, that Chriſt may come only to govern us as *ſheep*, not to be put to tame us as *Tigers*. Let us withdraw all ſupplies from our *luſts*, and not by any ſecret reſerved affection give them clancular aids to maintain their *Rebellion*, and then they will not be able long to make any *vigorous oppoſition*, nor conſequently much to diſturb the *tranquillity* of thoſe who have thus reſign'd themſelves to the government of the *Prince of Peace*: and if this cannot be done in ſuch an inſtant, but that there will be ſome previous diſplacencies, and uneaſie ſtruglings, yet even thoſe like the *Scorpion*, carry *Antidote* againſt their own *ſtings*, when 'tis conſider'd, that they are but the *pangs* of the *new-birth*, they will become very ſupportable by the expectation of that Joy to which they tend. An enſlaved people think themſelves fairly advanc'd to happineſs, if they can get but to make head againſt their oppreſſors, though they muſt expect many ſore *conflicts* and ſharp *engagements* before they become *Victors*: and certainly 'tis matter of ineſtimable joy to him, who has been under that ſad ſpiritual ſlavery, to be ſet thus upon even terms, with his ſword in his hand againſt thoſe, who once had him in ſuch vaſſalage, that he durſt not lift up a thought againſt them; but eſpecially when 'tis remembred with what *invincible aids* he is backt, ſuch as will aſcertain him of *victory*, if he do not treacherouſly defeat himſelf. And ſurely he muſt be of a ſtrange *phlegmatick temper*, whom all theſe conſiderations will not enliven, convey into

to him so much spirit as to make an attempt, and engage him to do that upon so pressing, so great a concern which mere curiosity prompts men daily to in common affairs. And he that is not moulded of this cold and stubborn clay, he that has not lost one of the *elements* of mans composition, and has but a *spark* of *fire* in his temper, will surely have some *warmth* towards this so inviting an *experiment*: and when he has once made it, I doubt not, it will then joyn with the suffrages both of reason and conscience in approbation of *Christs Laws*, and will with *Solomon* pronounce of this spiritual wisdom, *her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace, Prov.* 3. 17.

AND now it must be a strange *violence* of impiety, that must break this *threefold cord*, that shall disannul the joynt *sentence* of all that are competent *Judges* in this matter. This is not the strength of *Sampson* that *brake withs and cords*, but of the *Legion* that *pull'd in pieces fetters and chains*; and though too many men make it their *own work*; yet certainly 'tis only the *Devils interest*: he aspires to the rule and government of us; and to that end nothing can be more contributive, than these prejudices we take up against Christs conduct. A *Soul* like a *Nation*, can neither bear *two Legislators*, nor be without *one*: And *Satan* having but that single competitor, our quarrelling with Christs Laws, is virtually an embracing of his. When we send *Christ* that rebellious message, *Nolumus*

hunc

hunc regnare, we ſay to the other as the *trees* to the *bramble*, *Judg.* 9. 14. *come thou and reign over us.* And to this defiance of the one, and invitation of his oppoſite, he very nearly approaches, that thus defames Chriſts commands as irrational or ſevere. The traducing of a government being, we know, the immediate *præludium* to the caſting it off; *libelling* the forlorn hope to rebellion. But would God men would ſoberly weigh whither ſuch a mutinous humor tends; and when our outward *condition* has given us ſo many pregnant and coſtly *proofs* of its ruinous *effects*, take caution that it make not the like wrack within us: that we do not madly exchange Chriſts *gentle ſervice*, and *glorious rewards*, for Satans *cruel bondage*, and crueller Wages: the *golden chains* of the one which do more adorn than tie us, for the *Iron*, the *Adamantine* links of the other, which bind us till they deliver us over to thoſe *Chains of darkneſs*, where our captivity ſhall be irreverſible. If this ſo reaſonable, ſo neceſſary a care may be admitted; 'twill certainly confute the profane *ſophiſtry* of our age, ſilence our impious *cavils*, and inſtead of providing us of the colour of an auſtere *Maſter* to excuſe our *ſloth*, will engage us to that *diligence* that ſhall ſuperſede the uſe of ſuch *ſhifts*, and then we may hope to ſee *Chriſtianity* have a *Reſurrection-day* again, aſſume a Body ſomewhat of ſolidity and ſubſtance; which now wanders about like a *ghoſt* or *ſpectre*, a *ſhade* or vaniſhing *apparition*, which leaves no footſteps behind it: and to the re-union, O let us all emu-

louſly

louſly contribute, take up every one of us his dry *bones*, and bring them to the *Prophet*, or rather to *Him* who ſpake by that Prophet, to breath upon them, till at laſt they be cemented and inſpirited in active *duty*, to ſhew forth the *Praiſes of that God who hath call'd us out of darkneſs into his marvellous light*, 1 Pet. 2. 9.

CHAP. VI.

A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Partial Obedience.

ANOTHER ſort of prepoſterous Conſiderers there are, by whom the *power and force of Chriſtianity* is no leſs obſtructed: and thoſe are they that contrive not how they may moſt *comply* with *it*, but how they may beſt bend it to *comport* with *them*. That rebate its edge, or turn it only againſt ſuch of their corruptions as they have leaſt kindneſs for. That weigh the *precepts* with no other deſign but that of taking the *lighteſt*: Thoſe to which their conſtitutions or other circumſtances carry leaſt repugnance; and come unto the *Goſpel* not as to a *law*, but to a *Market*; cheapen what they beſt like, and leave the reſt for other cuſtomers.

THAT thus it is with many, needs no other proof than the variety viſible in the lives of ſeveral profeſſors. *One* man behaves himſelf *modeſtly*;

deſily, and tells you his *religion* commands him *humility*; yet at the ſame time tranſgreſſes the as ſtrict precept of Juſtice, and will defraud him he bows to. On the contrary *another* is Juſt, but Inſolent, and though his Sentence do not bend, expects his *Clients* ſhould. That man owns the purity of his religion in *viſiting the fatherleſs and widows*, yet diſclaims it again, by not *keeping himſelf unſpotted of the world*. This perſon is Abſtemious, but Uncharitable, will drink no *wine*, but thirſts for *bloud*. He prays much, yet curſes more; whileſt he is meek, but indevout. Now while the Rule is one and the ſame, how ſhould it come, that mens Practices ſhould ſo vary, were it not for the unequal Application: did they take it intire, though there might be difference in the *degrees*,, yet ſure not in the *kinds* of their Vertues, and as men would not differ ſo from one another, ſo neither would they from themſelves; there would be then no ſuch thing as a *charitable* Drunkard, a *devout* Oppreſſor, a *chaſt* Miſer; *Monſters* engendred by this unnatural commixture of *light* with *darkneſs*; but *piety* would be uniform and extenſive, and *bring into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Chriſt*, 2 *Cor.* 10. 5. And till it be thus, *Chriſtianity* can never be thought to have atchiev'd any part of its deſign, which was not aim'd againſt any one *ſingle limb*, but againſt the *whole body* of ſin. Alas! 'tis not the lopping off one of the remote *members*, that will render the remaining ones any whit the leſs vital; the having a *part* leſs to animate,

mate, will rather ſerve to concenter the ſpirits, and make them more active in the reſt: as we ſee the *pruning* of Trees makes them more *prolifick*. And this effect is very obvious among men: he who has no general diſlike to vice, if he repudiate *one*, 'tis commonly that he may cleave cloſer to *another*; and what he defaulks from ſome *dry, inſipid* ſin, is but to make up a *Benjamin*'s Meſs for ſome other more guſtful. If the Wanton be *ſober*, 'tis odds he thinks *exceſs* a Rival to his *luſt*; if the Proud man be *liberal*, 'tis becauſe *covetouſneſs* is inglorious; ſuch unevenneſſes are caus'd not by an *unkindneſs* to any Sin (unleſs poſſibly that averſion which natural conſtitution raiſes in ſome) but by a *partiality* to one or more favourite-Vices, for whoſe better *accommodation*, and *ſecurer reign*, not only Vertue, but other Vices alſo muſt give place.

AND this 'tis much to be fear'd will upon a true account, be found to be the *ſum* of many mens *piety*, ſomething they think they muſt pay to the *importunity* of their Religion, which upbraids them ſo loudly, that they are willing to *ſtop its mouth*, but yet would do it with as much *frugality*, and good managery as may be, and ſo conſider what 'tis they can beſt ſpare; what refuſe Sin which brings them in little of ſatisfaction, and is perhaps in competition with ſome other more agreeable: and *this* they can be content to devote to the *ſlaughter*, ſet it to receive all the *impreſſions of the ſword of the ſpirit*; and ſo uſe it as a *buckler* to their *darling luſts*, to ward off thoſe

blows which muſt elſe fall heavy on them; but alas! this is not to *obey*, but to *delude*; to ranſom a *greater* Sin with a *leſs*, and to tranſcribe in this matter the Counſel of *Caiphas*: to *let one die for the people, that the whole nation periſh not.* To make one forlorn guilt a Patriot to the reſt, whileſt in the *tempeſt* which threatned a general *ſhipwrack*, the *precious wares* are preſerv'd, by throwing the *leſs valuable* over-board.

AND truly that is commonly the event; men are ſo jolly and triumphant when they have worſted a *trivial inconſiderable ſin*, as if they had defeated the *whole army*: this poor deſpicable *ſpoil* is ſet up as their *Trophy*, and muſt, they think, witneſs for them both to God and man, that they are *good ſouldiers of Jeſus Chriſt*: they can, like *Saul*, with full confidence meet the *Prophet*, and tell him they have *fulfilled the Commandment of the Lord*, 2 *Sam.* 15. 13. though *Agag* and the beſt *cattle*, the reigning and fatteſt *ſins* be ſpar'd: and while they are thus ſecure, their ſins will certainly be ſo alſo, have no diſturbance or diſquiet from them, but lie at Eaſe and reſt, feed like *Canibals* upon their own kind, be nouriſht by the carkaſſes of thoſe unlucky vices, on whom the exterminating lot hapned to fall; and by that means grow to a prodigious bulk and corpulency. And upon theſe terms *Satan* himſelf will allow us to *mortifie ſome ſins*, nay will himſelf *caſt the firſt ſtone at them*: and like a rooking *gameſter* purpoſely loſe theſe *petty ſtakes*, that he may afterwards ſweep the *board*.

FOR

FOR if men ſhould give themſelves up univerſally to *all ſorts* of Ill, if they ſhould ſet themſelves in a total oppoſition to *all the documents* of their *profeſſion*, he would loſe one of his moſt uſeful *engins*; there could be no ſuch thing as a falſe deluſive hope: they might poſſibly by obſtinacy *harden*, or by diverſion *gag* Conſcience, but they could not bribe and corrupt it, make it ſit down well pleas'd and ſatisfied with itſelf. For when the *threats* againſt diſobedience ſhall occur to the mind of one who has in all inſtances diſobey'd, 'tis impoſſible he ſhould find any *ſalve*, any way of Evading the Threats, they make ſo directly at him: but he who can alledge for himſelf that he *obeys in ſome things*, confronts that to all Objections, and reſolves he is not *in the liſt* of the *diſobedient*: One or two ſuch comfortable inſtances are as mighty, as God promis'd the *Iſraelites* ſhould be, *Deut.* 32. 30. *one able to chaſe a thouſand, and two to put ten thouſand to flight*; all fears and miſgiving thoughts are diſſipated and fled before them: and as once the *French King* in his return to the numerous ſwelling titles of the *Spaniard*, thought the bare repetition of *France, France, France*, was a full ballance to them all; ſo when *whole files* of great and ſcandalous Crimes preſent themſelves, *one ſingle vertue* is thought a ſufficient counterpoize. He whoſe Conſcience upbraids him with all Profaneneſs towards *God*, and Inſobriety towards *himſelf*: yet if he can but anſwer, that he is *juſt to his neighbour*, he thinks he has *quit ſcores*.

and fears no farther reckonings: he who is immerſt in all the *filthineſs* both of *fleſh and ſpirit*, has abandon'd his Mind to *pride and envy*, his Body to *luſt and intemperance*; and ſo ſacrificed both thoſe to *Devils*: yet if he caſt but *ſome grains* of his eſtate upon the Altar; devote any *ſmall part* of that to God, for the uſes of *Piety* or *Charity*; he concludes that *Incenſe* will ſend up a Cloud thick enough to obſcure the other from the *eyes* of Divine Juſtice, and yield ſo ſweet a ſavour, as will perfume him in ſpight of all that Noiſomneſs: ſo extending old *Tobits* words beyond his meaning, that *alms, though alone, delivereth from death, and cleanſeth from all ſin.* He who is deep in *ſacriledge* and *rebellion*, that can daringly ſwallow repeated deliberate *perjuries*; yet if he can get but the demure tenderneſs, to *fear a ſudden oath*, he is *Chymiſt* enough to extract a *confidence* out of that *fear*, and preſumes that *formal* Civility to Gods name, ſhall expiate all the *real* Violations and Contempts of him: and while men make ſuch uſe of their *partial piecemeal* obedience, it can never be the *Devils intereſt* to diſturb them *in* it, to awake them *out* of their pleaſant dream, or to exact *of* them to depoſite thoſe poor unſignificant *remains* of their Chriſtianity, which ſerve only to make them more *Supine*, not more *Safe*.

NAY indeed his affairs are ſo ſtated, that to ſome he can and does, and without danger allow a yet far *greater indulgence*; he can permit them to bid much fairer than this for Heaven, and

yet

yet knows the purchaſe is far from being made; he can ſee them caſhier not ſome one *ſingle ſin*, but *whole troops* together, and yet not fear the ſinking of his Cauſe: He can truſt them ſo far, that as the *young man* in the Goſpel, they may be pronounc'd, *Not far from the Kingdom of God*: yet as long as there is but *one* unmortified Luſt, that can ſend them away *ſad from Chriſt*, his tenure is firm enough. *Herod may hear John Baptiſt gladly*, nay do many things upon it, yet let him but keep *Herodias*, and ſhe will ſoon be able to ſecure both *her ſelf* and *Satan* againſt the danger of that Competition. This is indeed his main advantage, that he can hold faſt by the *ſmalleſt thred*; and whereas to our bliſs a conſpiration and union of all Vertues is required; our *ruine* can ſpring from any *one* ſolitary Crime: *many rounds* make that Ladder wherewith we muſt ſcale *Heaven*: whereas *one ſtep* ſerves to precipitate us into the *Abyſſe*; ſo ſadly verifying the Poetical Axiome, *Facilis deſcenſus Averni*. In ſum, while there is but *any one ſingle ſin* indulg'd to: that is the *Devils tedder*; and though it ſhould be imagin'd ſo looſe, as to give men ſcope to range over *all other ſorts* of Vertues, to taſte the ſweet and feed liberally on them; yet ſtill the *beaſt* is in the power of him who has fixt the line, not only to be finally led away to *ſlaughter*, but alſo to have the *length ſhortned*, and be either put out of the *reach*, or quite removed from the *view* of thoſe *pleaſant paſtures*.

FOR though the ſecurity rais'd by ſuch an un-

uniform piety is in many ſo exactly apportioned to *Satans intereſt*, that he has no cauſe to wiſh the change of his tenure; yet where the circumſtances are ſuch, as will make it uſeful, he can eaſily twiſt his *thred* into a *Cable*. When he thinks one *Monarch* Luſt too mild a regiment, he can ſet up an *Athenian* Tyranny, or which is yet worſe, let in the whole *populacy* of Sin upon the Soul, which like the *Ægyptian Locuſts* ſhall overrun and devour it, *not leave any green thing on the ground*, and that this is in his power we have too much reaſon to conclude. He is, we know, a cunning *ſophiſter*, and if he has abus'd us ſo far as to impoſe *one* ſin upon us, he may thence very regularly deduce *many more*; as *one* falſe Premiſe admitted, may be improved into *thouſands* of falſe Concluſions. Indeed ſuppoſing a man reſolute to adhere to one ſin, he may with very good *Logick* perſwade him to multitudes of others. There are but two *Objections* uſually made to any Temptation; either the *offence*, or the *danger*; and theſe are uſually objectable to one ſin as well as to another; ſo that this *dilemma* readily offers itſelf: Either it is reaſonable to buy a *pleaſure* at that price, or it is not: If it be, then contrive that the *crime* be pleaſant, and that brings its *diſpenſation* with it: If it be not, then why doeſt thou live in this one ſin in deſpight of both guilt and puniſhment? The *later* part of the Dilemma 'tis no part of Satans buſineſs to preſs; but the *former* he has too much advantage of purſuing ſucceſsfully; if he can but

dreſs

dreſs up a temptation to look invitingly, the buſineſs is done. So ridiculous a thing is an *uneven Piety*, that it even laughs itſelf out of countenance, and wants only temptation to become *uniform Vice*. How abſurdly looks it, to ſee a man run away with *Joſeph* from the embraces of his *Miſtreſs*, and yet with full as great a ſpeed accompany *Gehazi* in the purſuit of a *bribe*; and how obvious is it to conclude that the former aſſault was improſperous only becauſe not manag'd with the *right weapon*; that he might have been *hir'd*, that would not be *woed*? What a *mockery* is it for a man to be *zealous for God*, and *rebellious againſt his King*? As in the reverſe, for a man to be *true to his King*, and a *rebel to his God*? And who can but think, that had either of the averted *Crimes* been cookt to their *Palats*, they might have chang'd *Meſſes*. Indeed 'tis not imaginable by what rules of diſcourſe, he that embraces *one ſin* ſhould reject *another*: if it be done only upon *phancy* and *humor*, as the *repulſt vice* will have reaſon to complain of great *partiality*, when as bad as itſelf is receiv'd and cheriſh'd; ſo it points out a way to attacque him more proſperouſly: let it ſhape itſelf to the phancy, and ſure *Satan*, who can *transform himſelf to an Angel of light*, can ſoon work that eaſie *change*: let the *younger* Brother get on the cloaths of the favourite *Eſau*, transform itſelf into the ſhape and intereſt of the darling ſin, and it need not doubt of a free *admiſſion*. But all this while to pretend *conſcience* for ſuch an *abſtinence*, is of all other pleas the moſt abſurd; for why

why ſhould he ſcruple at one, that abandons himſelf to another? As S. *James* argues concerning the *guilt*, ſo may we for the *act* of Sin: He that ſaid, *do not commit adultery*, ſaid alſo, *do not kill*; and 'tis abuſive mockery, the Souldiers *Ave Rex*, to bow to his *authority* in the *one*, and reſiſt it in the *other*. Thus unhappy is the caſe of him who entertains one ſin, his encloſure is broken down, and he's a common for all: he is left deſtitute of a reply to any temptation, and like a *baſhful* perſon, will be in danger of *yielding*, becauſe he is aſham'd to *deny*: and this I doubt not, many have found experimentally true; ſome ſins have been committed not ſo much upon the force of inclination, as to be conſentaneous to themſelves, to ſilence the upbraidings of their underſtandings for acting ſo unevenly, it being impoſſible to give a reaſonable account, why *this* and not *that*, or *that*; for when by *one bold wilful ſin* a man enter'd into a *ſtate of hoſtility* with God, 'tis not a *tenderneſs in all others* will make up the *breach*: and then they think the rule of known enemies takes place, where all civilities are diſclaim'd, and the quarrel manag'd to the moſt advantage. The reſolv'd *Adulterer* could perhaps without much difficulty be juſt; but when he conſiders that that one *Helena* of his will certainly make a war, he thinks 'tis an impertinent *niceneſs* to loſe a good prize, or diſmiſs his *covetouſneſs* while he reſolves to retain his *luſt*. The incorrigible *drunkard* could perchance eaſily enough be *chaſte*, but when he remembers that *drunkenneſs* ex-

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cludes him from the Kingdom of Heaven; having made that ſale of his eternal inheritance, he thinks 'tis but good husbandry to get as much as he can for it: So *treacherous a gueſt* is any *one Sin* admitted, and lodg'd in the heart, it deſpoils it of all its armour of defence, leaves it nothing wherewith to guard itſelf againſt any aſſailant; and be it *never ſo ſmall* a one, 'tis like thoſe *little thieves*, which being put in at the window, ſet the doors open to all the reſt.

BUT perhaps this *danger* may be thought in ſome degree warded by the *natural temper* and conſtitution of men, which neceſſarily renders them unapt to *contradictory vices*, and ſo will ſecure them at leaſt from ſo many as are diſagreeable to their Temper: but if this ſhould be granted, yet it confeſſedly leaves them open to all others, and that were certainly bad enough: he that is as *wicked*, as his *complexion* cannot only encline, but permit him to be, will not want much of the utmoſt number of ſins: but whatever we can ſuppoſe that to ſtrike off from the tale; yet in the ſecond place, 'tis very much to be fear'd, that will defalk nothing of the weight; he that ſins to the height of his *appetite*, perhaps *power*, ſhall he be ever the more *innocent*, becauſe there were ſome *nauſeated ſins*, which he had not Self-denial enough to commit? God abſolves us in proportion to the *rectitude* of our Wills, not the *niceneſs* of our Complexions: he that wills to purſue whatever he can find *guſtful*, how impious ſoever; ſhall it be *vertue* in him that ſome Sins are

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unſavoury and diſagreeing to his *Palate?* If it ſhould, there may ſo many extrinſick things be by Analogy brought in, either to ſwell or abate the accounts of our ſin, that we ſhall be much to ſeek in the eſtimate of it.

BUT in the third place, even theſe very averſions are no infallible preſervative; for if they happen to be more moderate and remiſs, than the love of ſome other ſin; that *predominant inclination* will ſubdue thoſe *diſlikes*, when ever its *intereſt* is to be ſerv'd by thoſe otherwiſe not *guſtful commiſſions*. There is nothing more ordinary than to ſee one appetite purſued to the violation of another. A man perhaps hates *drunkenneſs*, not only as a *beaſtial*, but *uneaſie vice*; yet if his *love* to Gain exceed his *diſlike* to that; when that is requiſite to make up the price of a *good bargain*, that *averſion* muſt ſtoop, and give way. A man deſpiſes *ſwearing*, as an *inſipid impertinent Sin*; yet if he ſet any great value upon *being in the mode*, and complying with the *gentile Dialect*, that will ſoon debaſe him to what he ſo much contemn'd: and truly there is ſcarce any other account to be given of that great and fooliſh ſin. But in no other inſtance is this ſo notoriouſly viſible, as in that of *duelling*. I need not ſingle out any one mans particular inclination; the nature of mankind doth certainly avert both killing and being kill'd: yet when that *Phantaſm*, that *Chimæra* honour, has once poſſeſt the mind, no reluctance of humanity is able to make head againſt it; but it commands as uncontroul'dly

troul'dly, as the *Centurion* in the Goſpel, *ſays to this man go and he goes, to another come and he comes:* nay as Tyrannically as the great *Cham* of *Tartary*, who as an Eſſay of his Soveraignty *commands whole troops to ride down precipices*; nay theſe Averſions are not only thus violently ſubdued by ſome foraign *luſt*, but are many times deſtroy'd even by *force* of that very *vicious principle* which gave them *birth*: for we miſtake if we think they are always vertuous, or ſo much as innocently founded; Vice is often at civil wars with itſelf; and the vehement *inclination* to one, ingenders a *diſplacency* to another; but yet ſuch a *riddle* is this *myſtery of Iniquity*, that upon the very ſame *baſis* is built both the *abhorrence* and *commiſſion* of the ſame Sin. For *example*, a Proud man as much hates to *fawn* and *flatter others*, as he loves to be flatter'd himſelf; yet let his *pride* but once work the other way, and ſet him upon an *ambitious project*, then all the mean condeſcentions imaginable are with eaſe digeſted, he can crouch and proſtrate, and as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks, *fall down and humble himſelf*, that by that deſcent he may rebound to the height he aims at: but ſtill pride is the common cauſe of theſe ſo diſtant effects. In like manner the Riotous Prodigal deteſts *covetouſneſs*, looks upon it as ſo ſordid and baſe, that he brands even *prudent frugality* as approaching too near it; yet let him but once find the *ſprings* to grow dry which ſhould feed his *luxury*; when he feels his Riot begins to exhauſt and prey upon itſelf,

then

then even that *deſpiſed Covetouſneſs* ſhall be call'd in to its aid, to dig *mettal* for the Furnace to melt, and ſo by a ſtrange *Antiperiſtaſis*, *prodigality* ſhall beget *rapine*. Thus unhappily *prolifick* is every Sin, that it carries in its bowels the *ſeed* and *principle* even of thoſe that ſeem the moſt *Heterogeneous*; and then how ſhall a man that has admitted but any one ſuch teeming luſt be ſecur'd that it ſhall not thus propagate, till his *Soul* become a mere *deſart*, fill'd with all ſorts of *wild* and *noxious creatures*.

THERE is but *one hope* imaginable to interpoſe, and that is that *Gods grace* ſhall prevent this exorbitant *growth of impiety* in him, and I acknowledge that is ſufficient to do it, where it may have its kindly *operation*; but where it has ſo, it will uniformly ſuppreſs *all ſin*, and therefore where *any one* continues in Force and Vigour, 'tis manifeſt that *operation* of Grace is obſtructed, and ſuch a man I ſhould deſire ſoberly to conſider what aſſurance he has, that he who has ſo evacuated Gods grace in one inſtance, ſhall not do ſo in another? If *in ſpight* of that grace he can be luſtful, why ſhall he not be as able to reſiſt it *in favour* of Drunkenneſs, Sacriledge, Rebellion, or any other crime to which he ſhall at any time have appetite? Can he imagine that God ſends forth an irreſiſtible ſtrength againſt ſome ſins, whilſt in others he permits men a power of repelling his *Grace*? That were to tranſcribe the *Syrians* abſurd Phanſie, that he is *a God of the hills and not of the valleys*: No certainly, he who has his own unhappy

unhappy experience to atteſt the poſſibility of fruſtrating the Divine ſuccours in one particular, has too ſure grounds to infer the like in others. Nay alas, it does not only infer it by way of *argument* and *deduction*, but it is very apt to produce it by way of *cauſe* and *efficiency*: We gain a readineſs to any thing by cuſtom and aſſuefaction, and he who has habitually oppos'd *Grace* in the defence of a *Luſt*, has deliver'd himſelf from that modeſty which makes the firſt defiance uneaſie, and ſo runs on with eaſe and boldneſs to future reſiſtance. It fares with men in this violation of *Gods grace*, as it does in that of his *Patrimony*, the firſt Sacriledge is lookt on with ſome horrour, and men are fain to deviſe *arguments* and colours to delude their reluctating *Conſciences*; but when they have once made the breach, their ſcrupuloſity ſoon retires; one draught of that *impious gain*, has ſuch a *ſtupifying effect*, that they can without check ſwallow on, till the Sin flame ſo fiercely, that nothing but mere want of Matter can extinguiſh it. But admit it were poſſible for a man to be ſecur'd of his own compliance with ſome parts of reſtraining grace whileſt he impugnes it in others, yet who ſhall aſcertain him of that grace? It being Gods, implies 'tis not in our power, he may ſurely do what he will with his own, and though his *premiſe* has made a ſure *entail* of it to all thoſe, who *humbly ſeek* and *diligently uſe* it: yet it no where engages that it ſhall be the *portion* of any other; much leſs that it ſhall importunately and endleſly renew its aſſaults on thoſe

thoſe who have often repulſt and put it to flight: In that caſe *Gods reſolution* concerning the *old world*, becomes appliable, *My ſpirit ſhall not always ſtrive with man*; and *Chriſt* who forbids us to *caſt our pearls before Swine*, will certainly never proſtitute what is infinitely more precious, his *Grace* to thoſe, who have ſo long trampled it under their feet; and ſo thoſe muſt be concluded to have done, who have perſevered in any one ſin: for Grace is uniformly oppoſite to all, and therefore the cleaving to any is defiance and affront to it. But we need not the help of inferences and deduction, the threats of God are expreſs in this matter: The *Talent* is decreed to be taken from the *unprofitable ſervant*, who has not employed it to the proper uſe, and ſuch infallibly is *every man* who has not actuated the *Grace* given him to the ſubduing of every *reigning ſin*; and the *reprobate mind* mention'd in Scripture as the moſt diſmal of all Plagues, the νοῦς ἀδόκιμος, which yields not to the melting and the purging force of Fire, and therefore does conſign to that of Hell, is founded upon the voluntary rejection of God in particular inſtances, *Rom.* 1. How then can he, that in any one ſingle thing ſo rejects him, aſſure himſelf that ſhall not be the event of it? That he who would not have Chriſt rule entirely in his *heart*, ſhall at once be put out of his *government* and *protection*? have all thoſe ſpiritual aids withdrawn, which ſhould either aſſiſt him to *good*, or fortifie him againſt *ill*; and like an out-law'd perſon be expos'd to the outrage of all that will aſſault him,

AND

AND now would God this might be ſadly pondered, that men would not be their own *Sirens*, and entertain themſelves with thoſe deceitful *melodies*, which will end in *howlings and gnaſhings of teeth*; that they would not think their having ſome few vertues, and but ſome few vices will ſerve to ſatisfie the deſign, or procure them the rewards of their Chriſtianity: for if they ſhould continue in this poſture, and not be tempted to grow worſe, they may certainly conclude, 'tis becauſe Satan finds they need not. And can they be *proud* of that Vertue which the Devil himſelf will allow them? And think themſelves *good* enough when they are as bad as he wiſhes them? But even in this they have no other tenure than his Will. When he pleaſes for his intereſt, or even for his divertiſement and recreation, he may hurry them to all that is moſt enormous; convert their *Hypocriſie* to *profaneneſs*, their *partial* Piety to *univerſal* Ungodlineſs; they have nothing to interpoſe in their own Defence, not ſo much as a reaſonable Argument to oppoſe to him, they have made a voluntary ſale of themſelves for one or more beloved ſin, and now as his *vaſſals* he may impoſe on them what others he pleaſes: and by their doting affection to their *Rachel*, take advantage alſo to obtrude the deſpis'd *Leah* upon them. And how wretched, how deplorable is this ſtate? What a *Piety* is this that we muſt owe to the *Devil*, while we can be no better than he will let us?

YET this is without *Hyperbole*, the condition

of every man that is not ſincerely uniformly Chriſtian; every indulg'd ſin gives *Satan* livery and ſeiſin of his heart, and a power to diſpoſe of it as he pleaſe. I know men are apt to flatter themſelves with other hopes, and think that thoſe obediences they pay to God ſhall like a pre-ingagement diſannul all after contracts made by guilt, and put them into the poſſeſſion of Him who is able to *bind* that *ſtrong man*. But God will not be acceſſary to ſuch a fraud, even towards the Devil; while they keep the price, enjoy that pleaſure or profit wherewith he bought them, God will never interpoſe to defeat him of his purchaſe.

AND as God will not thus forcibly wreſt them out of his hands, much leſs will he deſcend to a capitulation and compoſition with him. *God is a jealous God*, and what *jealous husband* did ever by compact divide his right with the *Adulterer*. Where he finds a perſevering diſloyalty he gives a bill of divorce and diſclaims his relation. Yet ſo beſotted are men, as to hope God will ratifie that alienation they have made of one part of their heart, and contentedly enjoy the reſt; and as competitors uſe ſometimes to do, ſhare with his Rival. But alas! that immortal quarrel will not be thus taken up, the difference between theſe irreconcilable *Antagoniſts* will not be ſo compromiſed. God diſdains ſuch a Treaty, nor will ever come ſo much as to an interview with his enemy, within the liſts and receſſes of one Heart. And while men labour ſuch an accord, they are but combining

combining with *Satan* againſt *God* and their own *Souls*: he knows well, that while he holds any part, God will have none, and ſo the whole falls to him, and then he may very ſafely be modeſt, and demand but moderately, and by that ſeeming difference and yielding, gain more than by all his moſt eager contendings. I ſuppoſe every man will diſown the having this ridiculous deſign of compounding the ſtrife between *Heaven* and *Hell*; but certainly it is the natural interpretation of ſuch partial obediences; when two *Litigants* contend for ſomething which I have in my keeping, if I divide it between them, is it not obvious to conclude I deſire to compoſe the diſpute and ſatisfie both parties, and is not this the very caſe here? 'Tis true indeed, it carries a very abſurd ſound, but then how more abſurd is it for men to act at ſuch a rate, that when 'tis repreſented to them in the trueſt colours, themſelves are aſhamed to own what they have done? And this calls loudly upon them to put themſelves out of the laſh of their own diſcipline: to recover ſuch an innocence that they may not be forc't with *David* to ſentence themſelves, when that their crimes appear in the light diſguiſe of a *Parable*.

AND this indeed is the only proper uſe of all theſe conſiderations, the danger and folly are as *unuſeful* as *unpleaſant* ſpeculations, unleſs it be in order to the reforming that wherein both are founded. Let men conſider themſelves, as engaged in thoſe wild projects which even themſelves look on with ſcorn; as enſnar'd in that unhappy

contract which has rendred them part of the *Devils* poſſeſſion, and contrive how they may obliterate that reproach, and diſentangle their Mortgag'd Souls.

AND for this there is but one way imaginable, and that is, by quitting their hands of that which they took as the valuable conſideration in that mad bargain; reſtoring *Satans* coyn to him, not only *principal* but *uſe* alſo: caſting away the main ſin and all the little appendages, which like off-ſets have ſhot out from that root; retaining nothing that has his mark and impreſs upon it, that ſo he may not pretend to any thing of theirs by right of barter or exchange. This, and this only is the way to diſſeiſe him of his Eſtate, to cancel thoſe fatal Indentures which bound them to him, and till this be done, as long as they keep any part of his *wages of iniquity*, his title remains in full force, they are ſtill his *ſervants*, his *vaſſals*.

EVEN the *redemption of Chriſt* has no efficacy towards the enfranchizing of ſuch; for though it proclaim an univerſal *Jubilee*, yet it forces liberty upon none; he that will nail his Ear to the door-poſt and defie a manumiſſion, may continue his ſlaviſh ſtate ſtill, and indeed though Chriſts death was deſign'd to reſcue us from the power of Satan; yet the firſt eſſay of that reſcue was to redeem us from our vain converſation: And where that is not done, which is ſo eſſentially fundamental to all the reſt, 'tis not poſſible any other part of that Redemption ſhould be atchiev'd,

chiev'd, unleſs we will confound the order of *Nature* as well as *Grace*, and make the *conſequent* precede the *antecedent*.

LET no man therefore upon any vain hopes delay the one only expedient to his ſecurity, but pay back the *earneſt-peny* he has received from *Satan*, fling away his *ſin*, how pleaſant or profitable ſoever, with the greateſt Abhorrence, as knowing 'tis the *price of bloud*, and that not only his *Saviours*, but his *own* too; and this immediately, leſt the forfeiture be irreverſible. We know the danger of lapſing time in caſe of Mortgage, but here our danger is greater, becauſe the time is ſo uncertain; for though God had nothing elſe to do in the whole tranſaction ('twas wholly our own work) yet 'tis he that aſſigns the time of forfeiture: he alone knows how far we may go in ſin, before we paſs the poſſibility of a retreat; how long he will be provok'd before he ſuffer his whole diſpleaſure to ariſe; and how many repellings of his Grace, and quenchings of his Spirit they are to which his diſertions are apportion'd. *Pharaohs* heart was hardened by God after the *Eighth reſiſtance*, and we have no ſecurity but ours may be *ſooner*: yet if that ſhould be taken as the ſtanding meaſure, how dreadful an abode would it make to many of us? Who is there that has eſpouſed any one *beloved ſin*, that has not much oftner repeated the *acts* of it, every one of which is a reſiſtance and a contumacy againſt God? Who is there that has not done it againſt ſo many expreſs warnings and loud calls of God in his own

Conſcience? Which renders it yet a fuller *parallel*, and 'tis to be fear'd, too many agree with it even in the laſt and higheſt circumſtance, that of the *Plagues* too, by an obſtinate perſiſting after ſo many *Judgments* ſent to mollifie and reclaim them; and then where the *premiſes* are the ſame, 'tis too likely the *concluſion* may be ſo alſo.

I SHALL not wiſh any Perſon ſo ſtrictly to apply this caſe, as to conclude, that he is already in this ſtate, but I could wiſh all men would apply it ſo far, as to infer how *poſſible*, nay how *probable* it is, that the very next reſiſtance ſhall put them in it. 'Tis not *Pharaohs* being a *Heathen* and they *Chriſtians* that will give them any ſecurity; it being no part of the Goſpel-Covenant, that men ſhall be ever the longer allowed to trample upon Grace. All the difference it makes is rather on the other ſide; the contempts are enhans'd to a higher guilt, and conſequently, the fewer acts may now ſerve to fill up the meaſure. And if their experience teſtifie to them, that in their particular God has us'd a greater long ſuffering, than he has given any grounds to expect, if the guilt of their Conſciences teſtifie that they have committed many more acts; and yet ſome remaining tenderneſſes and regrets witneſs alſo, that they are not yet given up to an utter hardneſs and obduration, O let them not preſume themſelves ſafe, becauſe they are not utterly deſperate; but lay their hearts open to be ſtampt and impreſt by grace, before they grow utterly inflexible; timely conſider what is the

deſign

design of this *longanimity*, and without any more struglings and resistance suffer it to attain its aim and *lead them to repentance.*

FOR though their Souls be not yet wholly petrified, yet how know they in what an instant that unhappy *Metamorphosis* may be wrought; or if it should not be so sudden, yet 'tis certain every act of sin makes gradual approaches towards it: so that if God should not inflict it by way of *punishment*, yet the mere force of Habit would produce it by way of *natural efficacy*: And to be convinc'd of this, I should require no more, but that men would reflect, and see what effects it has already wrought, how far it has advanc'd towards that fatal point. Let them send their thoughts back through every stage and period of their sin, and observe whether as that has grown, so their tenderness and reluctance of Conscience has not abated and decreas'd: Let them but recollect what regrets and disquiets they had, when they ventur'd upon the first unlawful commission, and compare it with their present, and I doubt not they will discern a great inequality; they will find that every act of sin hath allayed somewhat of the sharpness of those pangs, and proportionably to the frequency of the repetition they approach toward insensible: and then let him whose older Habit has multiplied those *Acts*, sadly consider how few *steps* he has to the end of his unhappy journey, though no extrinsick concurrent should hasten his pace. But when Gods desertion shall, as for ought he knows it may the

next minute ſupervene: that as a full and violent *Wind* drives him in an inſtant, not to the *Harbour*, but on the *Rock* where he will be irrecoverably ſplit.

NOR let any man fortifie himſelf againſt theſe terrors, by hoping that his one *ſingle* (perhaps ſmall) ſin ſhall not have this deſtructive force; for if it be *wilful* it carries in it that which is properly the *malignity* of all ſin, to wit, a reſiſtance and oppoſition againſt God, and this is ſo *mortal* a Venome, that the leaſt Doſe of it is *deadly*, as a man may as certainly be poiſon'd by a *dram of Arſenick*, as with the *largeſt draught*.

THE more natural inference lies the other way, if it be but a ſingle or petty ſin, 'tis ſo much the eaſier to part with; he that is bound with a *ſtrong Cable*, or with a multitude of leſſer Cords, may pretend ſome *neceſſity* of his Captivity, from the ſtrength of his bonds; but he that is tied with *one ſlender ſtring*, ſuch as one reſolute ſtruggle would be ſure to break: he is *priſoner* only to his own *ſloth* or humour, and who will pity his *thraldom*, where 'tis ſo apparently his *choice*? Do not therefore ſay my ſin is inconſiderable, and therefore I need not *relinquiſh* it; but my ſin is inconſiderable, therefore I need not *keep* it. So ſlight a pleaſure I may part with and find no miſs: this pedling profit I may reſign and 'twill be no breach in my Eſtate. And if *Chriſt* require a renunciation of *thoſe ſins* which are as the *Hand and Eye*, ſhall I ſcruple to depoſite *thoſe* which are but as the *Hair or Nails*?

NAY

NAY he may yet argue higher, and from the ſmalneſs of the ſin deduce the enhanſement of the Guilt: great acquiſitions carry ſome temptation in their face, but deſpicable prizes do rather avert than tempt. 'Twas the ſign of a *common harlot* to be *hired with a Kid, Gen.* 38. and ſure he muſt be of a ſtrange proſtitute Soul, that can adulterate for ſuch low trivial wages. To diſhonour God, though the *whole world* were to be acquir'd by it, were *great impiety*; but to do it for *handfuls of Barley* and *pieces of Bread, Ezek.* 13. 19. himſelf brands as a yet higher pitch. And ſure it argues a very light eſteem of God, when one poor contemptible luſt ſhall be able to overpoize him in our hearts.

NOR is the *folly* leſs than the *profaneneſs*, when there is but one *Jonah* to be caſt over-board, 'tis the greater madneſs to hazard a *wrack*; and let ſuch a man pretend what he pleaſes in extenuation of his ſin, make that appear never ſo minute and deſpicable, yet 'tis apparent all the love which other men ſcatter and diſtribute upon ſeveral, he has united and concentred in this one luſt. The moſt *doting affection* when it is ſummed up can amount to no more than *this*, that it makes a man expoſe himſelf to the greateſt *pain*, the greateſt *loſs* for the thing beloved. And this is moſt viſible here, *Hell* is as certainly acquir'd, and *Heaven* as certainly forfeited by *one* ſin as *many*; and then though there may be odds in other reſpects, yet what is there in this, between this more *modeſt* and the moſt *licentious* Sinner, but that

that the *former* puts the ſame value upon one, that the *other* does upon many ſins, and ſells his Soul ſo much the cheaper.

AND now would God ſuch men would review their *bargain*, ſoberly conſider what there is in this *Idoliz'd ſin* of theirs, which ſhould exact ſuch *coſtly ſacrifices*. Let him whoſe long intimacy and experience has given him acceſs to its moſt ſecret receſſes, that has rifled its bowels, and knows the utmoſt whether of pleaſure or profit that lies there conceal'd: Let him I ſay, that is thus qualified for it, make an exact inventory of its wealth, and then let him compare it with what he is to pay for it; weigh its flat and *momentary Pleaſures*, with thoſe moſt tranſcending and *perpetual Joys* which are *at Gods right hand*; its baſe and periſhing commodities, with thoſe unfailing treaſures in Heaven; and then judge of his purchaſe in reſpect of that part of his prize: And if that be not convincement enough, let him weigh the other alſo: thoſe ſad *pains* which are too *intolerable* to be ſuffer'd, and yet ſo *eternal*, that they can never ceaſe to be ſuffer'd, and think whether that be not too dear a rate for that pleaſure, whoſe guſt is ſo little, and whoſe duration is leſs: or what *profit* he will have in the revenue of his ſin, that *Gold and Silver* which will finally *eat his fleſh as it were fire*, *Ja.* 5. 3. and prove the unhappy *fuel of his flames*.

FROM all theſe *premiſſes*, certainly Reaſon and Religion do equally infer the ſame *concluſion*, to wit, that men ſhould not tolerate themſelves

one

one minute in any known sin of how small a size soever it be; nor so impertinently betray their Souls to ruine for that which they call light and trivial; and is so indeed in respect of the *acquest*, but overwhelmingly ponderous in regard of the *effects* and pernicious consequents. And O that mens practices might evince them to have made this just deduction, that those who have in many things preserv'd an *innocence*, would not be so ill husbands as to forfeit all the *advantage* of that Care for want of extending it a little farther, nor suffer the whiter parts of their Soul to be discolour'd or tincted by the reflection of one crimson sin; but rather let their tears wash that into a whiteness, that they may be uniform and of a piece. For though *Jacob* clad his darling *Joseph* in a party-colour'd garment; yet God owns none either for favourite-*Son*, or so much as *Servant*, that he finds so arrayed. The *followers of the Lamb* are all clad in *white*, and in that attire we must be sure to put our selves, if we mean to go in with him to the *marriage*. And since the Gospel is the invitation to that feast, let none imagine he has complied with it till he have thus fitted himself: till then he affronts and *baffles* his Christianity, sends it away empty without its errand; nay, which is worse, *prostitutes* and profanes it, makes it serve only for a *Gourd*, that he may sit under the shadow of it, and commit his sins the more undisturbed; but let him remember that he is all this while breeding that *worm*, which will smite this *Gourd*, and leave him unsheltred to that scorching

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ing *wrath* of God, which will make the improvement of *Jonahs* paſſionate Wiſh, that God would take away his life, his moſt rational Deſire; render not Death only, but Annihilation alſo as *eligible*, as it will be *impoſſible*.

CHAP. VII.

A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Miſtakes concerning Repentance.

ANOTHER dangerous Underminer of Chriſtian Practice is the many affected miſtakes in the buſineſs of *Repentance*. Men look upon that as the grand *recipe* of the Goſpel, and infallible *Catholicon* againſt all their ſpiritual *maladies*; and ſo far they judge right, for ſo indeed it is. But when they proceed to compound this ſoveraign *Medicine* for their own uſe, they do it moſt deceitfully; leave out the principal and moſt operative *ingredients*: and by being ſuch ill *Apothecaries*, defame the Goſpel as the *Diſpenſatory*, and *Chriſt* as the *Phyſician*, and likewiſe ruine themſelves as the *Patients*. But of thoſe who make this imperfect and Defective *compoſition*, all do it not alike; ſome leave out one part, ſome another, and ſome ſo many, that they retain nothing of its ſubſtance and reality: Eat out all the *heart* and vertue of it, and leave only an empty *ſhell*, the gilding, as it were, of the *Pill*,

Pill, the Form and mere outſide of *Repentance*.

IN this later rank I place thoſe who ſuffer *repentance* to paſs no farther than their Frontiers, and Outworks; aſſign it its quarters in the *ſuperficies* of the man, the *Face*, or *Tongue*, or *Geſture*; but if it attempt to penetrate any deeper, if it ſend but one ſerious thought to alarm the heart, then like the *Edomites* againſt *Iſrael*, *Numb.* 20. all the forces are muſtered to impede its paſſage; ſuch *formal* Penitents as theſe all ages have produc't. Chriſt tells of thoſe who *diſfigur'd their faces*, *Mat.* 6. 16. put on, as it were, a vizard only to act this part: and *Eſay* 58. 5. long before deſcribes them, by the *bowing down the head like a Bull-ruſh*, and certainly the race of them is not worn out in our days; a demure or rather a lugubrious *look*, a ſad or whining *tone*, makes up, 'tis to be fear'd, the *ſum* of many mens Humiliations. Nay as the world has of late gone, that alone were but a modeſt pretence: ſuch theatrical *forms* ſtickle hard for the *prize*, not of that one part, but of all religion: a *diſtorted countenance* is made the Mark of an *upright heart*, and none is thought to ſpeak the Language of *Canaan*, that dreſſes it not in an uncouth ſound: and then what wonder is it, that they are impatient others ſhould *worſhip God*, as *David* invites, *in the beauty*, while themſelves chuſe to do it, in the Deformity *of holineſs*.

BUT

BUT others make ſomewhat a fairer advance towards *repentance*, by taking in ſome of thoſe things which are indeed its *neceſſary concomitants*; of this kind is in the firſt place *confeſſion of Sin*: and this after ſome ſort is ſtuck at by few; no man who hath not herded himſelf with the worſt ſort of *Fanaticks*, imagines himſelf ſinleſs, or pretends to be thought ſo by others, but will very readily acknowledge to all the world that he is a *ſinner*: and as to *men*, ſo eſpecially and more ſolemnly to *God*. Every man that but offers at praying at all, thinks confeſſion a neceſſary Branch of his devotion: all publick *forms* have ever carried that in the *front*, as ſuppoſing it the moſt principal, univerſal, and daily requiſite to the lapſing ſtate of humane corruption: And perhaps 'tis the general innate perſwaſion of this, that hath ſecur'd that part of our *Liturgy*, from thoſe impertinent cavils, which have particularly aim'd at moſt other members of it. And I ſuppoſe this is as frequent in the *Cloſet* as in the *Church*: the only fear is, that there it is as looſe and general too: that thoſe private and particular guilts which are neither fit nor poſſible to be diſtinctly inſerted in *publick*, do many times loſe their place even in *private* Confeſſions alſo. The ſhortneſs and the eaſe of general forms being very likely to recommend them to thoſe whoſe numerous ſins threaten too great a length, and whoſe confus'd ſnarl'd conſciences render it difficult, thus to pull out thred by thred: but where *Sins* are thus moulded up in a

lump,

lump, they will like great *maſſes of Pills* or confections keep the more undecay'd, retain more of their *ſtrength* and *vigor*. So that *ſuch* Confeſſions are very indulgent to *Satans intereſt*, who fears not the impreſſions that can be made upon him, while his *body* remains entire: the great execution then beginning when 'tis broken and ſcatter'd, and each ſin is ſingled out for a particular purſuit: and where that is not attempted, the war can never be ſucceſful, nor thought in earneſt.

BUT ſuppoſe this be done; and by exact enumeration each ſin is parted from its fellows, as when a *conqueror* purſues the *flying troops* of routed Enemies: yet if this be all, if *quarter* be allowed, and any mercy given, no *real prize* is gain'd by this atchievement. He who recounts his ſins with milder purpoſe towards them than utter exciſſion, he makes no approach towards the eſſential part of Repentance, He may bring out large *Catalogues* of his ſins, and call them *confeſſions*; but he may better expreſs his own ſenſe, if he term them rather *inventories* of his goods, for ſuch 'tis apparent he reckons them, whileſt he reſolves to keep them. Indeed there is not a more abſurd piece of *Pageantry*, than theſe *formal* Confeſſions, and ſuch as ſhews how little *God* is conſider'd in his great Attribute, *the ſearcher of hearts*. 'Tis certain no man would hope to attone an offended ſuperior, by a ſubmiſs acknowledgment of his fault, did he know that his purpoſe of reiterating it were diſcern'd

diſcern'd: and what a tacite *blaſphemy* is it then, to treat *God* at ſuch a rate, as preſumes him as *deceivable* as a poor *Mortal*; and ſure this were a ſtrange Ingredient in *repentance*. We look on it as a high pitch of impiety boaſtingly to avow our ſins, and it deſerves to be conſider'd whether this kind of confeſſing them have not ſome affinity with it. Should I tell a man I have injur'd and provok'd you thus and thus, and ſo I reſolve to do again at the next opportunity: I refer it to common conſtruction, whether this were not to *juſtifie*, not *retract* the unkindneſs. Now what I ſuppoſe thus ſaid to man, is in the ſecret purpoſe of our heart, no leſs articulately ſpoken to God, who needs not our words to diſcern our meaning. Therefore whoever intends to *repeat* his ſins, nay does not ſeriouſly intend to *forſake* them, does in truth maintain and defend his vicious practice, how loudly ſoever his Tongue accuſes it. And ſuch *clamors* are but like the feigned Quarrels of combin'd *cheats*, in order to delude ſome third perſon. But alas, the ſcene is here unluckily laid, for God will not be mock'd, nor will the *Mercy* promis'd to him that confeſſeth and *forſaketh*, ever reach him that confeſſeth and *retaineth*. Confeſſion is no farther acceptable than as it either flows from, or tends to beget an abhorrence of Sin, and abſtracted from thoſe qualifications it becomes loathſome and diſtaſteful to God. Alas, can we think our *Hiſtorical* vein ſo pleaſant, that he ſhall be delighted with the *narrative* of thoſe crimes, whoſe perpe-

perpetration he deteſted? Can it be *Inſenſe* in his noſtrils, to have our *Dunghils* diſplayed? Or can his pure eyes be gratified with ſuch polluted proſpects? True indeed, he gladly deſcends to all this as a *Phyſician*; nauſeats not our *fouleſt ulcers*, when we bring them for *cure*: but when like *beggers* we make them openly our form of addreſs, and dread nothing more than their *healling*; certainly their View will only excite his *indignation*, not his pity. And this, 'tis to be fear'd abodes ſadly to many of us; 'tis our vulgar Objection to the *Romaniſt*, that they make their confeſſions contributive rather to their *confidence* than to their *reformation*: what their ſhare is in that guilt, I ſhall not here examine, but I may too truly pronounce they have not enclos'd it, that black circle of Sin and *confeſs*, Confeſs and *ſin*, encompaſſes as well *Proteſtants* as *Papiſts*; if poſſibly not quite ſo many, the cauſe 'tis doubtful is (what we need not boaſt) not that More of us confeſs *aright*, but that Fewer confeſs *at all*. But of thoſe that do, if we may but croſs-examine, and interrogate their *actions* againſt their *words*, theſe will ſoon confeſs (and that not *auricularly*, but in a loud and audible voice) the *invalidity* of their ſolemneſt Confeſſions. When we ſee a man that *yeſterday* kept a Humiliation, *to day* trampling on the necks, invading the poſſeſſions of his Brethren, we need no other proof how vainly and unprofitably, if not how hypocritically and provokingly he confeſſed his Pride, or Covetouſneſs; and the like

we may infer when we ſee any man perſevere in any groſs wilful ſin. And of ſuch, God knows, there are ſuch multitudes, as will give us inſtances more than enough, how wide a difference there is, between a *mere Conſitent* and a *true Penitent*.

BUT in the next place, a *paſſionate regret* at Sin, a *grief* and *ſadneſs* at its Memory, more ſpecioufly pretends to enter us into Gods roll of *Mourners*: Sorrow has (in vulgar acceptation) ſo engroſt the whole notion of repentance, that men are apt to ſecure themſelves, that the Wind of a penitential *Sigh* is ſo mighty, as will blow away the guilt of the moſt mountainous *Sin*: that if they have but *wept* a little upon their crimes, they have quite *extinguiſht* the wrath they kindled: but alas theſe are vain dreams, *God* who *delights not to grieve the children of men*, does not project for our ſorrow, but our innocence; and would never have invited us to the one, but as an expedient to the other. 'Tis natural even to mere *Animals* to ſhun that by which they have ſmarted, and therefore ſorrow for ſin is a very proper means to avert our appetite from it: but if we have learnt the unhappy skill of ſeparating the *effect* from the *cauſe*; if our Grief abate not our Love; if we can caſt kind looks at our ſins, even through thoſe Tears wherewith our Eyes are glas'd, this will ſure be as far from accompliſhing our deſign, as Gods: leave us equally unpardon'd, as unreform'd.

NAY alas, ſuch Sorrows as theſe will rather ſerve to *enhanſe* than *Expiate* our guilts; they

they are loud witneſſes againſt us, that we know the malignity of thoſe ſins we commit; that we have pois'd them, and find them as a *talent of lead* upon our Souls, and yet prefer them before Chriſts *light burthen*: that we have outvied that perverſe Election wherewith *Eliha* charges *Job*, and choſen *affliction* rather than *innocence*, *Job* 36. 21. and though we have felt the *gnawing of the Worm*, yet ſtill reſolve to cheriſh it, till it gain its woful Concomitant of *unquenchable fire*; and ſure this reſolvedneſs, this high *fortitude* in Sin, can with no reaſon be imagin'd a preparative to its remiſſion, 'twill rather ſerve to liſt us among Satans *Martyrs*, than Gods *Penitents*.

AND indeed if we examine the original of this kind of Sorrow, what is there that can with any face pretend to an acceptation? Alas! 'tis apparent there is no diſlike to the ſin; for the natural effect of that, would be the abandoning it. If I have faln into the mire, common reaſon directs me, not to ſit down and cry that I am ſo defiled; but to cleanſe and waſh my ſelf, and beware of ſuch another miſadventure. Now Gods enmity is purely with the ſin: and if we think to contract a league with him; we muſt eſpouſe his quarrel, hate what he hates: But in this caſe 'tis quite otherwiſe, we diſlike only the *conſequence*, not the *crime*; are diſſatisfied to ſee that what is ſo pleaſant, will not be ſafe: deteſt thoſe temporal or eternal miſeries, which God has annext to it: which is upon the matter to grieve, not becauſe

we are *guilty*, but God is *juſt*; and to avert only that part of the *evil*, of which he owns to be the author, that of *Puniſhment*; whileſt that of *Sin*, as our own creature, we dandle and careſs. And can we think it ſufficient to atone an incenſed Majeſty, that we love our own eaſe, while yet we love our ſin ſo much better? Is it a *vertue* to have ſome ineffective regrets to damnation, and ſuch a Vertue too, as ſhall ſerve to balance all our vices? This were indeed a compendious courſe to block up Hell gates, and leave none a poſſibility of ever getting thither, but thoſe who ſcaled the wall and deſperately reſolved to poſſeſs themſelves of that place of *Torment*. But alas, they are other *fruits* of Repentance that muſt *deliver* us *from the wrath to come*: for though I deny not, that the *apprehenſion* of Danger is extremely both reaſonable and uſeful, yet 'tis only by way of *preparative*: 'tis like the *Trumpet* that gives the *Alarm*, and ſets us to the *battel*, but it muſt not pretend to be like thoſe of *Gideon* that atchiev'd the whole victory. To ſee our *danger*, may occaſion, but does not cauſe, or neceſſarily infer an *eſcape*. I may madly leap into that pit which I ſee gaping to ſwallow me, and then my *fore-ſight* ſerves only to render me my own *murderer*. In ſhort, if that formidable aſpect of our Sins, make us run from them, it has done us the happieſt office; *pluckt us*, as St. *Jude* ſays, *out of the fire*: but if our love be ſo doting, as to counter-charm our fear, if we be ſo bewitcht with the *deceitfulneſs of ſin*, that we will

will have its Embraces, though we know them *deadly*; if we weep that we have ſinn'd, and yet go on to ſin; our wilful *Guilt* will defile our *Tears*, but our tears will never cleanſe our guilt. We only aſſiſt in the judicature againſt our ſelves; and to Gods condemnation add our own: and what we call our Penitence, becomes a ſad Atteſtation of our Incorrigibleneſs.

AND as this *mere Sorrow* will never avail, ſo neither will a *partial* and *imperfect reformation*, and that whether it be defective in reſpect of the *kind*, or of the *Duration*: to the former we have ſpoken elſewhere, and ſhall not need to repeat: but of the later there will need no leſs caution; men being apt to obtrude fallacies on themſelves in this as much as in the other. Every tranſient *gleam* of Piety is concluded to be that *flame* in which the Holy Ghoſt deſcended, and though it want the main circumſtance of reſting on them, yet ſerves to perſonate the Comforter. He that whileſt the ſoreneſs of his late pangs of *conſcience* remains, finds himſelf a little indiſpos'd for a new career in ſin, preſently concludes *repentance* hath had its perfect work in him, made that *change* and tranſmutation, which certainly denominates him a *new creature*, and pronounces his *vicious appetites extinct* and *mortified*: when alas they are but ſtrew'd over with a little *penitential Aſhes*, and will as ſoon as they meet with *combuſtible matter*, any apt temptation, *flame out* as fierce as ever; and God knows the event does too often actually atteſt this, after all

the ablutions, and purification of their repentance, their next work is to diveſt themſelves of their white robe, and thoſe whom yeſterday you ſaw in the *laver*, to day you ſhall find wallowing in the *mire*: and as with far the more *guilt*, ſo ſometimes with much the greater *confidence*, for having been ſo waſht: yet ſo ſtrongly are ſome mens phancies poſſeſt with their imaginary purity, that they are the laſt that take notice how the ſcene is chang'd: they comfort themſelves, that ſin and they have had ſome little *skirmiſhes*, though but preparatory to a cloſer *league*; that they had fixt good purpoſes, though there remain nothing viſible but their violation; and ſo will call themſelves Chriſts *Sheep*, though their notorious impurities witneſs them to belong only to that *herd* into which the *Legion* entred.

THIS is a deceit which one would think ſhould immediately detect itſelf, but 'tis ſtrange to ſee, how our *wiſhes* can preſcribe to our *faith*; and what a more than omnipotent power our ſelf-love has in reconciling contradictions: yet I can ſcarce think this innate ſtrength of corruption had been ſufficient for the purpoſe, had it not had the auxiliary aid of ſome commodious doctrines. My preſent deſign is ſo far from controverſial, that I am loth to point out any to which I muſt expreſs unkindneſs: yet upon this occaſion, I ſhall refer it to conſideration, whether that method which has been us'd to quiet *ſome* Conſciences, be not very apt to ſtupifie *more*. When I

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ſee one who from his preſent reigning ſins, regularly infers the illneſs of his ſtate; that is yet by his Caſuiſt diverted from that proſpect, and bid look back to ſee, whether no part of his life afforded any Evidence of true Grace; and if he can but remember any ſuch time, is warranted to make that his *Epocha*, from whence to date his *infallible aſſurance*; is told that that *immortal ſeed*, though it may be covered, yet cannot be choaked; but will moſt certainly ſpring up unto *Eternal life*: When, I ſay, I ſee this eaſie remedy preſcrib'd to his fears, 'twill be obvious for me to compound my ſelf an *Antidote* from the ſame *Ingredients*: To fix my Eye upon ſome *mark* of Regeneration which at ſome time or other, I either have, or phancied to have had upon me, and with the ſtedfaſt beholding of that, as of the *brazen Serpent* be fortified againſt all the *venome of my fiery luſts*: Caſt in this one ſtick, and with it ſweeten all the waters of *Marah*, ſecure me againſt all the bitter effects of my preſent guilts. How fatal an influence ſuch diſcourſings as theſe are apt to have on practice, is too obvious both in the cauſe, and effect: I need not examine the authority of that grand Principle on which they are founded; ſince if that were admitted, yet it will not juſtifie the before-mention'd Superſtructure: for ſuppoſe it receiv'd as an infallible truth, that grace if true can never be loſt: yet 'tis, by the confeſſion of all, ſo eaſie to be deceiv'd in judging what is ſo, and our partialities to our ſelves are ſo likely to betray us to that deceit; that theſe *Corollaries*

men deduce thence for their perſonal aſſurance, can never partake of the ſuppos'd infallibility of thoſe premiſſes they derive from, and conſequently are much too ſlight a *baſis* for men to truſt with ſo great a *weight*, as is that of their *preſent comfort* and *future ſtate*.

SEVERAL other pernicious errors there are in the matter of *Repentance* which men fall into, ſhall I ſay, or rather aſpire to; make it their ambition to be under their covert and patronage, and with extreme Violence to their *reaſon* as well as *religion*, climb up to thoſe caſtles in the air, and there fortifie themſelves impregnably againſt all the ſacred Artillery of Divine threats. Their *falſe confidences* ſerve them as *feather-beds*, not only to ſleep ſecurely in, but to *dead all bullets* that are ſhot againſt them. But of all thoſe deceitful *refuges*, there is none more treacherous, and yet more confidently and univerſally reſorted to, than that of a *Repentance in reverſion*, to commence no body knows when, ſome moneths or years hence, when this buſineſs is diſpatcht, that luſt ſatiated; or indeed to bear the ſame date (if not a later) with their laſt Will and Teſtament. This is that unhappy retreat to which *thouſands fly* as the routed *Syrians* to *Aphek*, 1 *Kings* 20. 30. till they are entomb'd in that *wall*, whoſe ſhelter they ſolicited: How deſperate the hazard of ſuch procraſtination is, hath been ſo convincingly demonſtrated by better Pens; that *trumpet* hath been blowed ſo loud by all our ſpiritual *watchmen*, that there remains nothing ſeaſonable, but to wonder whence

whence men have got that *Lethe* which ſecures them their ſleep in ſpight of that *Alarm*: and certainly 'tis matter of the greateſt aſtoniſhment to obſerve the ſtupid, yet common boldneſs of men, who ſo fearleſly expoſe themſelves to this moſt formidable of perils; who yet in things of far leſs danger and lighter conſequence are ſo nicely timorous, that no ſecurity is thought enough, every the remoteſt danger to their outward concerns, excites their preſent vigilance to avert it: but here that order is moſt abſurdly inverted, and the *preſent imminent danger* is aſſign'd and put off to their *future care*. Let the *Phyſician* tell them he obſerves ſome Symptomes of a latent *Malady*, ſome aptitudes or firſt Cauſes of a *Diſeaſe*; what haſte is there made to meet that Enemy *in the frontiers*, before it advance too far? All Arts of prevention are us'd, and ſuch uneaſie *remedies* ſubmitted to, as perhaps out-bid the *pain* of the Diſeaſe. In like manner let a *Lawyer* tell them he has ſpied ſome defect in an *entail*, which may perhaps in the next age give ſome interruption to their deſign of having their houſes endure for ever, *Pſal.* 47. how ſolicitous are they to repair that *error*, and leave nothing to the mercy of a *Law-quirk*? And in both caſes thank the vigilant care of their informer that gave them notice of their danger: but let the *Divine* tell them he ſees their Souls languiſhing under the moſt mortal diſeaſes; that they have actually forfeited their *inheritance* in the land of the living, they can hear it unconcernedly; ſay, or at leaſt think thoſe cares are to

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be remitted to *Felix* his more convenient ſeaſon, that when their *Bodies* are as infirm as their *Souls*, then care may be taken for both together. That 'tis enough for their *ſpiritual* Life to commence when the *natural* is expiring, and then to provide for *everlaſting* Habitations, when they are putting off their *Earthly* Tabernacle: as for the thanks they give their *Monitor*, 'tis generally the ſame that St. *Paul* received from the *Galatians*, to count him their *enemy for telling them the truth*, *Gal.* 4. 16. but alas he has no reaſon to reſent the injury, ſince 'tis but the ſame they offer to their neareſt and moſt intimate friend, that *Angel guardian* which God and Nature has placed within their own breaſts, I mean their *Conſcience*: let that at any time whiſper the ſame admonition, and immediately they cry out as *Ahab* to *Eliah*, *Haſt thou found me O my Enemy?* All arts are us'd to convey themſelves but of its Reach, Buſineſs, or Company, or Drink, or any thing is ſolicited to come in to their reſcue, that in that throng they may deceive its purſuit, or at leaſt in that louder noiſe drown its voice; and is not this to look on it as their Enemy, while they ſhun it as a *Malefactor* does the *Officer?* Yet I appeal to the breaſts of thoſe, who lean upon the broken reed of a late *Repentance*, whether this be not the caſe with them: let them tell me whether they dare truſt themſelves alone with their *Conſcience*, give it opportunity of ſpeaking freely to them, of laying before them the mad adventure they make of their precious *Souls*; which they do not only

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expoſe to as many hazards of a *ſwift damnation*, as there are accidents which may ſurprize their *bodies* with a *ſudden death*; but do beſides by this reſiſtance repel and quench that *Spirit*, without which they can never hope to effect that ſo neceſſary, ſo difficult a *work*; nay, I may, I fear, ask ſome of them, whether they have not ſo often ſhunned theſe parleys, that their *Conſciences* like an *abus'd Friend*, has at laſt given them over, ceaſt to purſue them with more of thoſe unwelcom importunities; and by its ſilence left them ſecur'd from all noiſe which may diſturb that treacherous ſleep into which they have lulled themſelves. To thoſe who are thus given up to the *ſpirit of ſlumber*, I cannot hope to ſpeak loud enough to rouſe them; but to thoſe that are but of the former rank, that have not yet ſo proſper'd in their unkind deſign againſt themſelves, as quite to have alienated their boſom friend, that are yet within the reach of thoſe *amica verbera*, the ſtripes and reproofs of their own Conſcience; to ſuch I would addreſs with this moſt affectionate *petition*, that they would not ſeek to remove themſelves from that *wholſome diſcipline*; that they would not fly that *Chirurgion* whoſe *Lancet* threatens none but the *impoſthumated parts*; but rather chuſe to be ſhewed the formidableneſs of their Danger, than by a blind embracing it, to periſh in it. And if they have but any general confus'd inclinations to this ſo reaſonable a requeſt, I ſhall then put on more ſolemnity, aſſume to come as an *Envoy* from thoſe dreaded Conſciences of theirs,

theirs, to *mediate* an enterview, to propoſe the fixing ſome time of parley, and beſpeak their *patience* to hear it out: And let them but grant this, let them but dare to do ſo much in order to their own ſafety, and I can ſcarce think it poſſible they ſhould after retain that daring, which only tends to their ruine. In a word, let men ſeriouſly and attentively liſten to that *voice* within them, and they will certainly need no other *medium*, to convince them either of the error or danger of thus procraſtinating their *Repentance*, which themſelves acknowledge muſt not upon their utmoſt peril be finally omitted, and yet nothing but an immediate diſpatch can ſecure it ſhall not.

'TWILL be needleſs to deſcend to a particular view of more of theſe deceits, they will eaſily be detected by this one *general Rule*, that whatſoever falls ſhort of a preſent, univerſal, permanent Change, falls as much ſhort of *Repentance*. All the pretences that are made upon any other ſcore are but the Garments of the *elder brother* put upon the back of the *younger*, which though they might delude a blind *Iſaac*, will never be able to deceive an all-ſeeing *God*. All that remains is to offer to the Readers conſideration, how nearly he is concern'd to guard himſelf againſt all deluſions in this ſo important an affair. It was an ancient *Stratagem* of War to poiſon the waters in an Enemies Camp, that ſo they may drink their own deaths: but *Satan* has here far out-vied that *Policy*. Were but our Nouriſhment infected, we had ſtill a recourſe left us to Medicine; but here

here he has envenom'd our very Phyſick, and what *cure* remains for thoſe whoſe very *remedies* are their *diſeaſe*? When that Bath which was deſign'd to cleanſe us, is itſelf polluted, we may well cry out as *Dionyſius* of the corrupted River of *Alexandria*, *ποῖον γένοιτο ἂν πάντα καθαίροντος ὕδατος ὕδωρ ἄλλο καθάρσιον*, what Flood ſhall cleanſe theſe Waters? Where can we be ſecure, when our *Repentance* (which the Apoſtle, 2 *Tim.* 2. 26. ſuppoſes the Means of diſentangling us) is itſelf become our Snare? This as it loudly proclaims our *danger*, ſo ſurely in all reaſon it ſhould awake our *care*, teach us not to ſuffer our ſelves to be abus'd with deluſive appearances and ſhadows of *Repentance*, leſt we finally find that *Ixion-like* we have embrac'd a Cloud. What an amazing defeat will it be to him, who preſumes his Tears have blotted out the *hand-writing* againſt him, to find the full Bill brought in at the great Aſſize, and thoſe he call'd his *penitential ſorrows* here, to prove but the Prologue to that *Tragedy* which ends in *weeping and gnaſhing of teeth*! And therefore let every one timely provide againſt that fatal ſurprize, uſe this excellent receipt, not as a *Coſmetick* only to beautifie the face, give him ſome fair appearance to himſelf, but as *Medicine* to reſtore health; reduce him to ſuch an *Athletick* vigorous Habit, as may evidence itſelf in all *vital* Actions, which will prove the beſt evidences in our laſt trial, where the inquiſition will not be ſo much upon our Mouths or Eyes, as upon our Hands: not how many *confeſſions* we have made,

made, or how many *tears* ſhed, but what *acts* of Vertue we have ſubſtituted in the room of our Vices: whether we have broke off our Sins by *righteouſneſs*, and our Iniquities by *ſhewing mercy to the Poor*; and without this 'tis infallibly certain, our Chriſtianity will be as ineffectual to our *Bliſs*, as it is to our *Piety*: if we will not permit it here to bring us to the *obedience* of Servants, it ſhall never inſtate us hereafter in the *inheritance* of Sons.

CHAP. VIII.

A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Miſtakes concerning Almighty God, and the methods of his Providence.

TO theſe Miſtakes of our ſelves and intereſts, we have added others alſo concerning God, which are no leſs deſtructive to Chriſtian Practice, for as the *right knowledge of God is by our Saviour, Jo.* 17. 3. put as the Epitome and ſumme of all that leads to *bliſs*, ſo our miſpriſions and miſapprehenſions of him, are no leſs remarkable for the contrary effects; nor can we ſuppoſe it otherwiſe, when we remember that this is the grand work and *baſis* of all Religion, and therefore if this *foundation* be deceitfully laid, the *ſuperſtructure* muſt neceſſarily ſink and periſh: and in this ſenſe 'tis poſſible for us at once to build on the *Rock* and the *Sand* too; we may fix our

our faith intentionally on God, and yet by abſurd notions and unwarranted conceits of him, defeat in the particulars what we eſtabliſht in the groſs: repreſent him ſo utterly diſtant from what he is, that under that diſguiſe he will not much appear, either an Encourager or Rewarder of our *Piety*, and then we may gueſs how 'tis like to flouriſh, ſince the Apoſtle gives it as a *Fundamental Axieme*, Heb. 11. 6. That *he who comes to God muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them which diligently ſeek him.*

OF theſe Miſtakes concerning God, there are divers; many more than the deſign'd brevity of this diſcourſe will admit me to examine. I ſhall only mention *three*, thoſe are, Firſt, concerning his *Decrees*, Secondly, his *Attributes*, Thirdly, his *Providence*.

BY his *Decrees*, I mean not thoſe ſtanding *rules* which he has in his Word ſet forth as the *meaſures* by which he will diſtribute rewards and puniſhments; but thoſe ſecret *purpoſes of his Will*, which he neither commands us to ſearch after, nor will permit us to know. That there are many Miſtakes concerning theſe, the numberleſs Diſputes that have been rais'd about them will ſufficiently atteſt, it being impoſſible for two Contradictory Opinions to be both *true*, though in things of this abſtruſe nature 'tis very poſſible both may be *falſe*. 'Tis not my purpoſe to wade into thoſe bottomleſs controverſies, which like a Gulph have ſwallowed up ſo much time and induſtry of learned men: I ſhall only in *general* commend

commend it to the Readers conſideration, whether it be probable, or indeed poſſible for thoſe Opinions to be *true* which infer *falſhood* in God: And then let the ſecond enquiry be, whether that be not too evidently the reſult of thoſe diſcourſes, which ſet an Oppoſition between his *revealed* and his *ſecret* Will, his Commands and his Decrees, making the one a blind for the better execution of the other, as if all the Tranſportation and Zeal he expreſſes *for* us, all the paſſionate enamoring invitations he makes *to* us, were only to ſport himſelf with our credulity: like the divertiſement of thoſe Men, who court them for Wives, whom they would abhor to marry: nay, as if all the proteſtations and moſt ſolemn oaths of God, were deſign'd but to advance the deluſion, and raiſe expectations, merely to defeat them. This is ſuch a ſevere ſort of *Irony*, as we would all think not only unkind but unjuſt in a man; and 'tis not poſſible that God, who appeals to us concerning the equality of his ways, ſhould fall ſhort of the ſtricteſt meaſures among us, or exemplifie to us an unſincerity he forbids us to follow.

HOW very inauſpicious influence ſuch *doctrines* are apt to have on *practice* is too viſible, for ſince 'tis as well the inſtinct as duty of our nature to aſpire to an aſſimilation with God, even that moſt laudable and generous ambition ſhall by this means become our ſnare; for when *God* ſhall be thus miſrepreſented to us, drawn out by the black Lines, not only of *ſeverity*, but *deceit*, rendred a Falſifier of his *Word*, nay *Oath*; 'twill give

give not only temptation but warrant to the like Practices: we shall easily swallow up all the particular commands of God, in that fundamental one of being like him; as we are taught himself has done both his commands and promises in his hidden Decrees. This is so natural a piece of *Logick*, that 'tis very unsafe men should be trusted with those *premisses* whence 'tis deriv'd. And though we are not over apt to transcribe that Copy God does really set us, yet this spurious one will not miss to be taken out: that pravity of our nature which hinders in the one, exciting and spurring us on in the other. This is a way to reconcile our Vices with our reputation, and sin *cum Privilegio*; and there is little doubt of mens aptness to use that advantage; we see it in lower instances. The *Vices* of a Prince draw shoales of followers, when his *virtue* leaves him the more eminent, because single, and renders him rather revered than imitated: And certainly 'twas none of the Devils slightest *stratagems* on the *Gentile* world, to give them *such Gods* as might exemplifie to them all those *odious crimes*, wherein he desir'd to immerse them. Whether this may not be a *branch* of the same Illusion, I wish the Propugners of this doctrine would seriously consider.

AND as several *ills* are hereby countenanc'd and authoriz'd, so is all *vertue* in general discouraged and disheartned; this benumbs us in our Christian course, substracts that spirit and vigour, which should carry us through the weary stages of duty: indeed it cuts the very *sinews* of

Induſtry, baffles and makes ridiculous all *purpoſes* of Labour; for what ſhould invite a man to ſtrive for that, from which he knows he is either irreverſibly precluded, or elſe ſo infallibly aſcertain'd of, that his negligence cannot defeat him. Theſe are ſuch *extremes* as afford no *middle*, wherein the vertue of induſtry may exiſt, hope being equally out-dated by the deſperateneſs or unneceſſarineſs of an undertaking: and how neceſſary hope is to excite endeavour we may learn of St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 15. 5. where he preſſes his *Corinthians* to the conſtancy of Chriſtian Practice upon this ground, that their *labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord*. But according to ſome mens doctrine, 'tis ſcarce poſſible for a man to know whether his labour be in vain or no; ſince the effect of it depends not upon the revealed *promiſe*, but ſecret *purpoſe* of God, and who knows whether there may not lie ſome *Dormant Decrees* againſt him, which when he thinks he has run his *race*, ſhall yet defeat him of his *Crown*. Whether a reward thus ſtated will much animate mens diligence, I may leave every man to judge by the like circumſtances in their *ſecular* concerns; and if they find they would there damp their courage, diſpirit and diſhearten them from attempting, there will be ſure more reaſon to conclude it in theſe *ſpiritual* Affairs, wherein our induſtry is commonly much leſs indefatigable.

BUT I ſhall not farther inſiſt on the ill conſequences of particular miſtakes; there is one *fundamental error*, which if it could be cured, would ſuperſede

ſupersede all the reſt; I mean our bold Folly in *medling with Gods Decrees*, which we call hidden, and yet ridiculouſly confute that Epithet by pretending to know them. This is ſo much an inſolence as forfeits the compariſon, which might belong to it as an error; we ſee *ſecular States* jealouſly reſerve their *private Councils*; and ſhall we think God ſo ſcrutable, or our ſelves ſo penetrating, that none of his ſecrets can eſcape us? Or if we think him, as indeed he is, *unfathomable*, why do we thus madly attempt what we confeſs *impoſſible?* Eſpecially ſince we ſhall not only loſe the thing we ſo vainly purſue, but others which we might elſe enjoy. 'Tis as if a man ſhould be ſo tranſported with a buſie earneſtneſs of knowing his Princes *Secrets*, as quite to forget his *Laws*, and incur capital puniſhment. God has given us *rules of life*, which upon the ſevereſt penalties he requires us to ſtudy and practiſe; and we divert from theſe, and make it our buſineſs to trace his *Counſels*. We are gazing at the *Stars* to read our deſtiny, and look not to our *feet*; and by that negligence experiment the worſt fate they could have portended: for I think we may ſay our wild *Phancies* about Gods Decrees, have in event reprobated more than thoſe *Decrees*, upon which they are ſo willing to charge their ruine, and have bid fair to the damning of many, whom thoſe left ſalvable. And indeed 'tis to be expected from Divine Juſtice, that ſuch bold Inquiſitors ſhould find nothing but their own Deſtruction. That Ark which devoutly reverenced brought *bleſ-*

ſings, when curiouſly pried into diffus'd *Peſtilence* and *Death*, 1 *Sam.* 6. 19. Nay the very *Poets* will tell us, that if we will have *Prometheus* his Fire, we muſt take *Pandora*'s Box alſo: and ſure Induſtry cannot be worſe laid out than thus to fetch home *Plagues*, and while ſo much of it runs waſte to ſuch unhappy purpoſes, 'tis no wonder if we want for better; forget our *calling* by contemplating our *predeſtination*; and let the Opinion of our *fate* be at once the Encouragement and Excuſe of our *ſloth*, than which nothing can more evacuate the purpoſe and deſign of our Chriſtianity, which Divines have truly defin'd to be not a *contemplative* but *active* Science.

TO the ſame unhappy Effect concur our Miſtakes of *Gods Attributes*, if I may call them Miſtakes, which ſeem to be rather wilful Neſcience, they being ſo delineated to us both in his Word and his Providences, that 'tis not want of light, but winking againſt it that muſt leave us ignorant. What the *ſpeculative errors* are in this matter concerns not my preſent deſign to examine: but there ſeem to be ſome Miſperſwaſions concerning the *Divine Attributes*, which do remarkably tend in their conſequence and effect to the corrupting *mens manners*; nay, look as if they were deſign'd, and affectedly choſen for that purpoſe; I mean eſpecially thoſe concerning his *Juſtice* and *Mercy*, which being the *Attributes* in which we have the moſt immediate Concern, the Errors in them are the more noxious and deſtructive. Of this ſort is that narrow ſcanty notion

too

too many have of *Gods Juſtice*, which we meaſure not by *him* but *our ſelves*, and therefore proportion it not according to his *infinity*, but our own *concerns*. That is an Attribute from which we promiſe to our ſelves no advantage, and therefore we are willing to contract and ſhrink it up, make it ſerve only as a *Cypher* to advance *mercy*, but are unwilling to underſtand it in its proper Extent; think it a *word of form* put in to compleat the greatneſs of Gods Stile, rather than any *intrinſick part of his nature*, which he muſt deny himſelf to put off.

THUS do we ſacrilegiouſly ſteal from God a part of his being, and while other Sacrileges invade only his *patrimony*, this commits a riot upon his very *nature*; yet as if we meant the Proverb ſhould indemnifie us, and *Exchange* extinguiſh the *Robbery*, we add to another attribute what we have defaulkt from this, and amplifie and extend his *Mercy*, as much as we confine and limit his *Juſtice*; that is the one infinite Ocean, wherein not only we, but himſelf muſt be ſwallowed up. We will think of him under no other notion, nor allow him to be any other thing, but what ſhall be in ſubſerviency to this: we will have him Powerful to *relieve* our Diſtreſſes, but not to *revenge* our Crimes; Wiſe to *defeat* the machinations of our Enemies, but not to *circumvent* our own indirect or impious Policies; All-ſeeing to *behold* our Wants and Griefs, but not to *diſcern* our cloſer Guilts; True to *perform* his Promiſes, but not his Threats. In ſhort, we

model all that is in God to our own wiſhes; and inſtead of believing him what he is, phancy him what we would have him. Like *Micha*, *Judg.* 17. 5. *making* us *a God* for our own peculiar uſe, and forming the Deity we mean to worſhip. A ſtrange bold Inverſion, for Creatures thus to faſhion their Creator, put their own ſtamp and impreſs upon him, and ſhape him to their Phancies. And indeed 'tis nothing but *Phancy* that has to do in this Attempt, and accordingly it muſt vaniſh as the *operations* of that illuſive Faculty uſe to do. We may repreſent God to our ſelves as we pleaſe, but that has no more real *influence* on him, than a *deforming Optick-glaſs* has on the *Object* it diſguiſes, he is ſtill *the ſame* amidſt all our wilde conceits of him, and will always make good the *title*, by which he deliver'd himſelf to *Moſes*, *Exod.* 3. 14. *I am that I am.* All that is in him is equally immenſe and infinite, his *mercy* need not invade his *juſtice* to gain itſelf a larger field of action, which is already (as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks) *over all his works*; neither his *juſtice* encroach upon his *mercy*, that having alſo a Province wide enough; all impenitent ſinners being within its Verge, and God knows how much ſoever we ſtreighten it in our *opinions*, we do indeed too much extend it in its *real force*, by rendring our ſelves the proper objects of it. In ſhort, God who is the author of *order* and peace, cannot be ſuppos'd to be in *confuſion* within himſelf; the divine Attributes are not in *ſtrife*, but perfect *harmony*; 'tis we only that have rais'd this more than

than *Gigantick war*, not only *againſt* Heaven, but *in* it. The ſeveral *Luminaries* purſue the regular motions of the *Spheres*; but we confound at once the *Laws* of their Creation, and their *Author* too, ſtrive to eclipſe and darken *the father of light*. But if the removing of an earthly Land-mark be a crime puniſhable both by God and man, what Thunder-bolts belong to thoſe who thus attempt to ſet new Boundaries in Heaven, to limit and meaſure out even the *divine Nature* by the proportions of their own *Phancies*, and indeed ſuch temerity as this, is too like to confute itſelf, and feel that Juſtice it will not believe: yet as great and daring a crime as it is, I fear there are few that can totally acquit themſelves of it: for though all diſavow it, yet he that ſhall narrowly ſearch his own heart, will ſcarce find it clear from all degrees of it: We are all apt to cheriſh a *flattering hope*, that God is not ſo ſevere as he is repreſented, or that if in reſpect of his Juſtice he be a *conſuming fire*, yet that Mercy will be ſure to ſnatch us out of the *burning*; like the Angels to *Lot*, aſſiſt our Eſcapes, and provide us a *Zoar*, *that our Souls may live*: and this Hope though founded only in our *wiſhes*, is very apt to ſlide into our *faith*, and make us believe what we would have: by which means this becomes a kind of *Epidemick* Hereſie, the moſt frequent and common miſperſwaſion that occurs concerning the divine Attributes.

IT would be a work more long than uſeful to recite the ſeveral errors that have ſprung from

this one. That of *Origen*, that *the Devils ſhould finally be ſaved*, is a noted and pregnant Inſtance, which could be deriv'd from nothing but this unequal apprehenſion of Gods Juſtice and Mercy: And beſides all other ancient, we have many branches of a later growth, that ſpring from the ſame root, a ſet of plauſible falſities, which would quench the *unquenchable Fire*, and kill the never *dying Worm*; I mean thoſe allaying ſoftning deſcriptions ſome of this age have made of Hell, ſome changing the *kind*, others abating the *intenſeneſs*, or at leaſt the *duration* of thoſe Torments, each ſubſtracting ſo much from this *Tophet*, that they have left *Atheiſm* an eaſie task to take away the reſt: and may give ſuſpicion they mean to viſit that place, which they are ſo induſtrious to make eaſie.

BUT whatever they do *themſelves*, 'tis ſure this is the way to ſend *others* thither, to take off their fears of it, to make them think it not ſo dreadful a place as they once ſuppos'd, and conſequently leſs careful to decline the ways that lead to it. 'Tis indeed too obvious that ſuch perſwaſions do mightily impugn Chriſtian Practice, and embolden men in ſin: and God knows we need no ſuch encouragement; the more general fallacious hopes of Mercy being too ſufficient for that purpoſe without theſe ſupernumerary deceits: but between the one and the other, *Libertiniſm* is like to outgrow all reſtraints, and the Opinion of *Gods goodneſs* inſtead of *leading men to repentance*, will ſlacken thoſe reins where-

with-

with our bruitiſh Nature ſhould be bridled and reſtrain'd, and we thus left unto the ſway of luſt and paſſion, muſt run headlong upon ruine, *as the horſe ruſheth into the Battel.* For alas, we are not ſo *generous* as to do well for Vertues-ſake, nay nor ſo *provident* as to do it for Reward; 'tis our fear that is the moſt prevalent incentive, and accordingly we find religion generally makes her firſt impreſſions there. They are *the terrors of the Lord* that do moſt uſually, and moſt effectually *perſwade men,* 2 *Cor.* 5. 11. our Hearts muſt be pricked, and at thoſe Orifices piety enters. Now when all theſe terrors ſhall be ſuperſeded by the opinion of an overwhelming mercy, when *Hell* ſhall either be annihilated, or ſuppos'd ſo to annihilate us, that we ſhall loſe our paſſiveneſs with our being, and be as uncapable of ſuffering, as even *Heaven* itſelf can make us, what will be left to engage us to *vertue,* or deter us from *vice?* Alas, do we not often ſee a daring Luſt bid *battel* to all the artillery of Heaven, meet *God* in his loudeſt Thunder, and venture on *damnation* in its dreadfulleſt form? And can we think it will be more modeſt, when it ſhall be told that they are only edgeleſs weapons it hath to encounter? That Gods Thunder amidſt all its noiſe carries no *bolt?* And that the Flames of the bottomleſs pit, are but a *painted fire,* that at a diſtance may fright, but not hurt us, or at leaſt ſo hurt us, that we ſhall not feel it? When thoſe rubs which fear interpos'd are thus removed, there is nothing to ſtay the courſe of headlong riot, but pre-

precipiciouſly it will on, where ever *ſtrong deſire* ſhall drive, or *flattering luſt* allure: he that loved his ſin, even when it threatned him *ruine*, ſerv'd it aſſiduouſly, when it promiſed no other wages than *death*, *Rom.* 6. 23. how will he hug this *viper* when he thinks 'tis ſtingleſs, and give up his ear to be bored by that *Maſter*, which affords him preſent pleaſures without future ſtripes? We ſee even in Civil matters the *preſumption* of Impunity is the great *nurſe* of Diſorders, and if it were not for the *coercive* power of Laws we ſhould ſoon ſee how little the *directive* would ſignifie; and doubtleſs 'tis the ſame in ſpiritual or rather worſe, by how much we are more bent upon the breaking of Gods Laws than mens, and conſequently will be the more apprehenſive of any Encouragement.

OF the truth hereof our experience gives too ſad proof, none ruſhing ſo boldly upon Gods *juſtice*, as thoſe who have moſt fortified themſelves againſt the *dread* of it, as if they meant their *practice* ſhould experiment the truth of their *ſpeculation*, and make the utmoſt trial whether God can be provoked or no. Indeed men uſe *mercy* as amaz'd Paſſengers ſometimes do a *plank* in a ſhipwrack, lay ſo much weight upon it, as ſinks both it and themſelves; ſo periſhing by too great a confidence of their reſcue, and finding a *Gulph* where they expected an *Ark*: not that I ſuppoſe Mercy unable to ſupport the weight of all the *Perſons*, nay, and of all the *ſins* in the world, which have not the one ponderous *adherent* of Impenitence

ſuper-

ſuperadded; but that is a burthen which even the divine *Clemency* ſinks under, refuſes to plead ſuch a cauſe, and refers it to *Juſtice* as its proper Court: And therefore to ſin on, in hope of mercy, is to undermine our ſelves, and commit a folly as abſurd as ruinous, I wiſh I could ſay 'twere not alſo as frequent: but God knows 'tis every where too apparent; men openly avow it, ſo that 'tis become the vulgar Anſwer to every convicting Reproof, that *God is merciful*: And ſurely they that obſerve the growth of vice, ſince our new deſcriptions of Hell came abroad, will have cauſe to think the one has had no ſmall influence on the other, and that while ſome have made it borrow the uneaſineſs of our humane ſtate to make up its torments; they have taken care it ſhould be juſt, and lend us back ſins of a greater magnitude: This miſerable traffick have theſe Factors ſetled, between the preſent world and the infernal region, that Hell ſhould have Earths *pains*, & Earth Hells *wickedneſs*; the later alas we are too fully poſſeſt of, which is like to ſend too many ſouls to diſcover the deceit of the other. In fine, our groundleſs confidences of mercy, and thoſe other *Chimera*'s we forge out of that, are certainly the moſt frequent and dangerous underminers of Chriſtian practice: theſe like the *Sun* give heat and vigour to thoſe inordinate luſts, which a juſt *fear of vengeance* would as a winters froſt nip, and deſtroy: And till we lay by theſe eaſie ſlight thoughts of God, and conſider him in thoſe more awful attributes which exact our reverence, his *mercy* will only

only ſerve to ripen us for his judgment; that ſmooth and gentle property in God, which to all who abuſe it not is indeed the *oil of gladneſs*, will thus perverted acquire the more fatal quality of Oil, ſerve only to intend our *flames*, and remove us as far from the *rewards* of Piety, as our bold *phancies* have done from the *practice*.

A third ſort of miſtakes there are by which Piety is obſtructed, and thoſe are ſuch as concern *Gods providence*, about which the world has long ſince had many diſputes; ſome entirely denying it, as preſuming God ſo wholly taken up with the contemplation and enjoyment of his own felicity, that he is utterly inconſiderate of that of his creatures, and an unconcern'd *ſpectator* of humane affairs; others limiting and reſtraining it to thoſe things only which themſelves were pleas'd to think worthy of the divine inſpection and conduct: But theſe queſtions have been more bandied among *Philoſophers* than *Chriſtians*, and therefore are beyond our preſent enquiry. Yet give me leave by the way to expreſs my fears, that theſe errors have yet ſome ſecret rooting in too many hearts; that there are many who rather formally *ſay*, than cordially *believe*, that God governs the World, and diſpoſes as well of *humane* as *divine* things; a ſuſpicion that is rendred too probable by thoſe indirect arts men uſe, to poſſeſs themſelves of ſecular advantages; for did they ſeriouſly think, that all thoſe things are in Gods hands, from whence they are neither ſtrong nor cunning enough, either to wreſt or pilfer them,

them, 'tis ſcarce imaginable they ſhould attempt ſuch painful impoſſibilities, diſquiet themſelves in vain, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks, and which is worſe, forfeit all title to them as Gods gifts, by thus aſſuming to make them their own. But this is a diſquiſition I muſt leave every man to make in his own heart; only let me ſay, that he that has there any doubt of Gods univerſal or particular providence, has alſo in it the root of all *unchriſtian Sins*, of Diſtruſt, Solicitude, and Fraud: there being nothing that can effectually ſuperſede our own carkings and contrivances for our ſelves, but the aſſurance that God cares for us. Men being ſtill apt to ſcramble, where there is none from whom they expect an orderly and ſufficient diſtribution, and therefore this error whereever it is found, may well be reckon'd among the impeders of Chriſtian duty.

BUT beſides thoſe who thus doubt of Providence, there are others liable to great miſtakes, I mean thoſe who to their *juſt belief* of Gods Providence, ſuperadd a *groundleſs confidence* of their own skill in fathoming it; that are not content to know it in its *product* and event, but pretend to diſcern it in its moſt ſecret *deſignments* and purpoſes; and do not ſo much *reverſe* Gods diſpenſations, as *interpret* them. I do not here mean to condemn all *particular applications* of providential Events, which are ſometimes ſo extraordinary and remarkable, that they are their own *expoſitors*, and point out the *conſtruction* we are to make: and an humble advertence unto ſuch,

ſuch, is not only innocent but neceſſary: but when men ſhall attempt to read every line in *Gods hand*, to make their own inference from every efflux of Providence; theſe pretenders to *divine Palmiſtry*, ſeem to differ only thus much from thoſe who make a trade of the *natural*, that they Cheat *themſelves* as well as *others*.

YET there want not ſome who have gone yet farther, and think not only to *underſtand* Providence, but *aſſiſt* it: not only trace it in all its intricate windings, and concealed *intendments*, but help it in the execution, and give birth to its *conceptions*: Of this ſort eſpecially are thoſe, who having poſſeſt their brains with ſome conjectural expoſitions of obſcure prophecies, will adminiſter to providence, and call out thoſe events they expect: and as if they were conſcious that God would not make good their dreams, endeavour to do it themſelves. This Age has afforded too many inſtances of this, when the *fulfilling of Prophecies* has by ſome been made the ſolemn ſummons to *rebellion and bloud*: and in order to the *hating and deſtroying the whore*, *Rev.* 17. 1. men have been animated to hate and deſtroy all who were not infected with their own Phrenzie. This we know has been call'd the *helping of the Lord againſt the mighty*, and ſomething more than votive Curſes awarded to thoſe who refus'd to aſſiſt. Thus have they firſt wildly miſtaken, and then no leſs wildly out-run Gods deſigns: as if like *Baal*, *Jud.* 6. he were unable to plead for himſelf, to vin-

vindicate his own cauſe, or effect his purpoſes without their help: and having reſolved what he ſhall do, obtrude themſelves upon him as his inſtruments; how repugnant ſuch *anticipations* of Providence are to the *intereſts* of Chriſtianity is too apparent from the many *deteſtable effects* they have produc'd.

BUT ſetting aſide theſe, let us return to thoſe we ſpake of before; who preſuming to expound providential Events, make them the *Criterion* by which to judge both of *perſons* and of *cauſes*, concluding the one loved or hated, the other approved or diſallowed by God, according to their *proſperous* or *adverſe* Succeſs. The firſt of theſe was by our Saviour exploded, as an undue way of proceſs in the *Jews*, in the caſe of the *Galileans*, and before him *Solomon* had given it as a Maxim, that *no man could know love or hatred by all that is before him*, *Eccl.* 9. 1. And if under the *Jewiſh Oeconomy*, where temporal Bleſſings made up ſo great a part of their Promiſes, it was ſo; much more is it under the *Goſpel*, whoſe frame and compoſure is quite diſtant; which inſtead of propoſing ſecular proſperities to its *proſelytes*, aſſures them the contrary; ſets up the Croſs as the Standard under which they are to fight, and affords no temporal Hopes but with an allaying *proviſo* of Perſecutions and Afflictions; nay, the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* goes farther, makes them not only *incident* but *neceſſary* to Chriſtians, the badge and cognizance of Sonſhip, whileſt the *no chaſtening* is the fatalleſt Sign, *a token of baſtardy* and

and abdication, *Heb.* 12. 7, 8. And doubtleſs the experience of every Chriſtian aſſerts the doctrine; we are all apt with the *Prodigal* to forſake our fathers houſe, and as long as we can have the riot and not the wants, ſhall never think of returning; we muſt be famiſht into conſideration, and our *husks* alone will ſend us home to the *fatted Calf*. And can there be a greater indulgence in God, than thus to make our Iniquity our Puniſhment, that it may not be our Ruine? To embitter thoſe ſenſualities whoſe luſciouſneſs ſerves to intoxicate us, and to clip thoſe wings which he ſees carry us from him? Stories tell us that the *Trojan* Wives after the *deſtruction* of their Countrey, being wearied with their reſtleſs vagrant life, neceſſitated their Husbands to a *ſettlement* by *burning* their Ships. And the ſame kind ſtratagem God has upon us: he ſees that our worldly acceſſions do rather enlarge than fill our appetites, and carry us on to farther purſuits, and by drawing us ſtill more from him the Center of reſt, expoſe us to endleſs wandrings, and then what can be kinder than to reſcue us from ſuch a condition, that Curſe of *Cain*, to be *a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth*, to deprive us of our treacherous proſperities, and fire thoſe Ships wherein we are preparing like *Jonah*, to *fly from the preſence of the Lord*; ſo by a happy neceſſity forcing us to fix our ſelves on him. And this is the worſt God deſigns us in every adverſity: and did we mean but as well to our ſelves, we ſhould not miſs of receiving the happieſt Effects, even that

that *peaceable fruit of righteouſneſs* the Apoſtle ſpeaks of, *Heb.* 12. This holy men ſo well underſtood, that we find them dread nothing ſo much as an uninterrupted proſperity; they, like the *Muſcovite* Women, grew jealous of Gods love when he forbare to ſtrike; upon which ſcore it is, that in the Ancient Fathers, there are ſo many ſolemn petitions for ſtripes; ſuch importunate ſolicitations for thoſe *medicinal corrections*, wherein they judg'd both Gods *kindneſs* and their own *ſafety* to conſiſt.

AND then how perverſe, how prepoſterous are our meaſures, when we conclude quite the other way, eſtimate *Gods love* only from *outward ſucceſſes*, and think he is never angry but when he ſmites: a Perſwaſion, which as it is very falſe in its *grounds*, ſo very pernicious in its *effects*, and creates hopes and fears, as fallacious as itſelf. For firſt, if we apply it to our ſelves, it produces miſchiefs proportionable to the divers ſtates under which we are. If a man be *full* and *proſperous*, it makes him *proud* and *ſecure*, for when he has not only the poſſeſſion of thoſe things the World values, but takes them as an atteſtation of Gods peculiar kindneſs and approbation, what ſhould make him either conſider or reform his guilts? If he have ſanctity enough to poſſeſs him of Gods favour, and all theſe profitable effects of it, he will not eaſily be perſwaded he needs more: and any man that ſhall tell him he does, ſhall be heard with the ſame indignation wherewith *Cræſus* entertain'd *Solon*, when he found him queſtion that

happineſs, which he expected he ſhould have *admir'd*. Proſperity is in itſelf an emboldening thing, but when backt by this Opinion of it, grows into all inſolence, till at laſt it even recoil in the face of the Donor, and *dare* God by all thoſe enormous riots, to which it *enables Men*.

ON the other ſide, this Opinion preſents a leſs *merry*, but not leſs *dangerous* Temptation to thoſe in adverſity; for when they ſhall look on *themſelves* only as the *Anvil* for Gods ſtrokes, they will be too apt to complete the *parallel* by anſwering it in *hardneſs* and inflexibility; have the ἀντίτυπον τῶν, as the Father calls it, which reverberates the blow on him that gave it. Perſevering wickedneſs is ſo naturally the iſſue of Deſperation, that we find the *Jews* take up the one merely to countenance the other, pretend *hopeleſneſs* to avoid *reformation*: Thus we find it, *Ezek.* 33. 10. *Our iniquities are upon us, and we pine away in them, how ſhould we live?* And again more plainly, *Jer.* 18. 12. *There is no hope*, and then the Inference is ready, *let us walk every one in his own ways*. Endeavour is the child of hope, and we attempt not to attone one whom we conclude implacable; ſo that Wrath may *conſume*, but will never *melt* us; 'tis Love only that has that *ſofining*, diſſolving Power, and unleſs we diſcern a mixture of that in Gods *inflictions*, they will never render us *malleable* to his *impreſſions*. We kiſs a Fathers hand and rod, when an Executioners ſtroke we ſuffer rather than bear. St. *John* tells us *we love God becauſe he loved us*, 1 *John* 4. 19.

19. I wiſh all men would make good the Inference; but 'tis ſure they are too apt to do it in the reverſe, and will hate if they apprehend themſelves hated; a ſtate which at once exemplifies, and anticipates the worſt part of *Hell* to us, yet very incident to thoſe who interpret every ſtroke of Gods, as the effect of enmity and utter averſion. This is to do that to our ſelves which the *Devils* ſo deprecated from Chriſt, to *torment us before our Time*, it being peculiar to the vengeance of the other World to be merely punitive, that here being rather *diſcipline* than *vengeance*, deſign'd to reduce, not deſtroy us: and indeed beſides the *pain of ſenſe* which this Error creates, it does (to perfect the Hell) give that *of loſs* alſo; deprives us of one of the great Evangelical *felicities*, that of *rejoycing in Tribulations*, which our Saviour thought ſo conſiderable, as to inſert amongſt his Beatitudes; and his Apoſtles frequently mention it triumphantly as the great *priviledge* and *prerogative* of a Chriſtian. For if all adverſe ſucceſſes be a note of Gods diſfavour, there will be no place for joy even in the moſt pious ſufferings. St. *Stephens* raviſhing proſpect will be intercepted, and a *Martyrs* death be as uncomfortable as a *Malefactors*. But if theſe were the only ſufferings to which joy were annext, there would be but too few concern'd in the deprivation; thoſe wherein we are more univerſally intereſſed, are thoſe Chaſtiſements of God which our Guilts provoke; which though in reſpect of their *cauſe* they are Matters of the great-

eſt ſadneſs, yet in regard of their ſignificancy and *effect*, they are Grounds of comfort; they ſignifie that God (however diſpleas'd) yet has not abandoned the care of us; thinks us worth his *correction*, and deſigns our *reducement*: and the Effect will (if not obſtructed by us) be anſwerable to that deſign: our *Chaſtening* here reſcues us from the *ſins*, and conſequently the *condemnation of the world*, 1 *Cor.* 11. 32. and this is ſure no ſlight motive of rejoycing; and we are very unjuſt to God and our ſelves, if we will exchange it for the ſullen murmurs of a deſperate incorrigibleneſs.

AND as this perſwaſion is thus *pernicious* in reflection on *our ſelves*, ſo neither is it more *innocent* when applied to *others*; for firſt, if we look on the men that proſper in the world, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks, *Pſal.* 73. 12. we ſhall too often find them anſwer the *character* he gives them in the former part of the *Pſalm*, and when from their temporal affluence we ſhall conclude Gods favour to them, 'twill be hard reſiſting the *temptation*, which (without that Argument) the *Pſalmiſt* was under, of thinking it *vain to cleanſe our hearts, or waſh our hands in innocency*. Nay, we ſhall be apt to joyn our ſuffrage to thoſe in *Malachy* 3. 15. and call the *proud, happy*: and if we eſteem them ſo, 'tis natural to deſire to be like them; ſo we ſhall quickly grow to deſpiſe a poor or *afflicted Innocence*, and embrace all thriving *proſperous ſins*.

ON the other ſide, if we look on others in an adverſe calamitous ſtate, this Opinion ſuggeſts hard and ſevere ſentences concerning them, inclines

clines us to judge where we ſhould ſuccour, and how great an accumulation of Miſery that is, we may learn from *Job*, whom we find not ſo often nor ſo paſſionately complaining of any of his *preſſures*, as of the unkind *cenſures* of his Friends, who weighing in this deceitful balance of temporal ſucceſſes, made very falſe judgments of him, and as if they were to Glean after Satan, endeavoured to deſpoil him of that only comfort his malice had left, the Conſcience of his Innocency. This is, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks, *to perſecute him whom God has ſmitten*, and *to talk to the grief of thoſe whom he hath wounded*; a thing repugnant to the common temper of humanity, and much more to that tenderneſs, thoſe affections and bowels Chriſtianity requires; and therefore in this reſpect alſo, we may reckon this perſwaſion very injurious to Chriſtian duty.

NOR is it leſs ſo when applied to *Cauſes*, in which it is full as deceitful a Rule as it is in *Perſons*: God has deſign'd us another meaſure of our undertakings; his *word* and *law*, by the general proportions whereof, we are to ſquare and accommodate our particular *actions*: he ſends us not to his *providence*, and the various diſtributions of that, or allows us to judge of the *Juſtice*, by the *Succeſs* of our *Attempts*. If that were the trial, 'twere impoſſible for any enterprize to be lawful, ſince that which ſhould legitimate it, is ſubſequent to it, and can have no influence on it, to the making it good or bad: and as it does not make, ſo neither does it infallibly ſignifie it to be either;

either: and of thoſe who preſume it does, I ſhould ask whence it came to do ſo? If by any aſſignation of God, let them produce it; and if not thence, I'm ſure it can make no pretence to certainty, God having no where oblig'd his *Providence* to make good our *phancies* and *conjectures*. Nay, if we look into Scripture-examples, we ſhall find this irrefragably confuted; the ſame Cauſe having at ſeveral times differing ſucceſs. Thus the *Iſraelites* were diſcomfited at their firſt aſſault upon *Ai*, and yet ſucceſful after; 'twas ſomething extrinſick to the cauſe that made the variation, that ſtill continuing the ſame. The like we find in the caſe of the *Benjamites*, who though in as ill an engagement as can well be imagin'd, had yet two victories over the other Tribes, *Judg.* 20. But there is one inſtance that may ſerve for all, and that is the taking of the Ark by the *Philiſtines*; he that ſhall contemplate that, will ſure never think fit to meaſure cauſes by ſucceſs, unleſs he will give the deference alſo to *Dagon*, who then triumpht in the ſpoils of the God of *Iſrael*. In ſhort, 'tis evident victories are not ſo entail'd upon the juſteſt cauſes, but that they may be, and often are cut off, either by the guilts of the undertakers, or by ſome other ſecret diſpoſal of the Divine wiſdom; but the former is ſo frequently the obvious cauſe of it, that we are not often put to reſort to the later. 'Tis no ſtrange thing to ſee all *Iſrael* troubled by an *Achan*, or have the *Ark* taken captive from off the ſhoulders of a *Hophni* and *Phineas*, nor will it ever be poſſible

poſſible for the beſt cauſe to ſecure itſelf from the blaſting influence of its Abettors crimes.

THIS is ſo clear and evident a Truth, that 'tis matter of ſome wonder, how the contrary perſwaſion ſhould ever inſinuate itſelf; and indeed it is not probable it ever had, if Intereſt, that grand *Sophiſter*, had not introduced it. Men engage in deſigns not on intuition of their *lawfulneſs*, but *profit*; and when they are ſuch as nothing can warrant *à priore*, their only reſerve is to make them good *à poſteriore*; to bring a licence after the fact, and juſtifie their beginning by their end; which how ridiculous ſoever it may ſeem to ſober reaſon, yet ſuch is the natural ſhame, or ſecular inconvenience of owning an *unjuſt Act*, that men will wrap themſelves, though in the thinneſt and moſt *diaphanous veils*, make uſe of the abſurdeſt *pretences*, and fainteſt *colours* to ſhadow their *Guilt*, and whileſt conſciouſneſs bids them ſay ſomewhat for themſelves, and the caſe affords no ſolid plea, they are driven to theſe deplorable ſleights and ſubterfuges. Indeed this is an argument that ſtands ſingle, and is ſeldom us'd but in thoſe cauſes that admit of no better; which we may reaſonably conclude to be the reaſon, why it was ſo much inſiſted on by our late diſturbers, who in ſuch *abundance of light*, as they own'd, could not be ſuppos'd *ignorant* enough to believe themſelves: 'twas certainly the deſtitution of better arguments that caſt them upon this, forc't them to ranſack the *Alcoran*, and rifle a piece of *Turkiſh Divinity* to make good their *Saintſhip*.

They now diſcern the unskilfulneſs of that *plea*, which a little time has converted to an *accuſation*. The great change it has pleas'd God to make among us, retorting their conquering *Syllogiſmes*, and making them need a new ſucceſs to juſtifie their vaunts of the old. God grant we may not here releive them again, and by our perſonal ſins, help them to that which the juſtice of their Cauſe never did, nor is like to acquire them.

BUT though this *plea* of ſucceſs be frequently urg'd in *policy*, yet it prevails with many who know not that it is ſo; indeed the *vulgar* are ſo much ſubjected to their *ſenſes*, that generally the concluſions drawn thence are eaſily embrac'd, when thoſe from Reaſon and Conſcience have a double difficulty, firſt to be underſtood, and next to be admitted, and the moſt *elaborate diſcourſe* ſhall not convince them of the right of that *cauſe*, which in the laſt appeal to Gods Tribunal by War, has been openly condemn'd; whileſt the *ſpoils* of victory as much ſatisfie the Underſtanding, of the *juſtice* of the Prize, as the Deſire, with the *wealth* or *glory* of it. And this is it which renders ſuch kind of arguings very pernicious, they being ſo fitted to the common temper, that they ſeldom miſs to be effectual; and engage the *heady multitude* in the Proſecution of the worſt *deſigns*, that are recommended to them by the one *Catholick vertue* of Succeſs. This is indeed as the *Prophet* ſpeaks, *Ez.* 13.22. *to ſtrengthen the Hands of evil doers, that they turn not from their wickedneſs*; to dazzle their Eyes ſo with the ſplendor of

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prosperous iniquity, that they can never come to take an exact view, and discern it in its true form: And doubtless this was none of the least-prevailing arts of seducement among us, and drew in many to abet those seditious practices, which all Laws of God and Man prohibited, and whereby *Christian Religion* has at once been violated and defam'd; has not only *her precepts* broken, but *her self* aspersst with the foul consequences of that disobedience, and so buys one injury with another; the contempt of her *Authority* with the loss of her *Reputation*.

WE have now seen the *ill consequences* issuing from these mistakes of Gods *Providence*, but we must take notice that there remains yet as great or greater danger on the other side; and that a *total neglect* is worse than an *erroneous construction* of it. For though God hath secluded us from that more exact minute discerning of his purposes, yet he means not his *dispensations* should be lookt on as wholly *insignificant*, and therefore has given us the general scope and meaning of them, according to which we are to limit and restrain our *wandring guesses*, and also judge of *particular events*. Now as Gods original and primary *design* in the creation of Man, was to render him a *subject capable of eternal happiness*; so also have all his *subsequent Acts* toward him aim'd at the same end: and because there is nothing removes man so far from that grand purpose of his being as Sin; therefore God has made the suppressing of that, the universal intendment of his disposals concern-

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ing us: ſo that the moſt different diſpenſations do ſeverally purſue that one end; *proſperity* and *adverſity* in their ſucceſſive changes are ſent to reclaim us from the *error of our ways*, with this only difference, that the *one* leads, the *other* drives. This is aſſerted by St. *Paul*, who tells us, that *the goodneſs and long-ſuffering of God is to lead us to Repentance*, *Rom.* 2. 5. And alſo that when we are judg'd, *we are chaſtened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the World*, 1 *Cor.* 11. 32. And indeed the whole Scripture runs in the ſame ſtrain; and both from proſperous and adverſe ſucceſſes urges the obligation to obedience. This is the notice God expects we ſhould take of all his dealings towards us. And the want thereof we find often ſharply upbraided by God to the *Jews*: how often does he recount his redeeming them from *Ægypt*, his enſtating them in *Canaan*, and all his wonderful works for them, with an accuſing reflection upon their ingratitude; and that we may know his *Judgments* are no leſs to be accounted for than his *Mercies*, we find him, *Amos* 4. making a *Catalogue* of them, and cloſing every period with this *Pathetick Reproof* of their obſtinacy, *Yet have ye not returned to me, ſaith the Lord*. In ſhort, God requires that we ſhould obſerve every turn of his *hand*, in order to the reforming our own *lives*, and by the ſeveral *mediums* of Gratitude or fear, infer that *neceſſary Concluſion* of a ſincere *univerſal Obedience*; and the neglect of this is the crime the *Pſalmiſt* mentions, *Pſalm* 28. 5. with ſo ſevere a menace, *They*

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regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands.

AND as this is requir'd from ſingle perſons, ſo alſo from Societies and Communities, which as they are in their publick capacities the moſt eminent ſubjects of Judgments or Mercies, ſo are they the moſt eminently accountable for both. And though the Neglect and Abuſe of Gods methods be a very provoking *guilt* when 'tis only *perſonal*, yet is it much more ſo, when it becomes *national*: And therefore as it is every mans concern for his own *peculiar* to examine how he has anſwered Gods methods towards him, ſo is it an enquiry very pertinent in relation to the *Publick* alſo; eſpecially where the diſpenſations have been remarkable and extraordinary; in which reſpect the *Inquiſition* cannot appear more neceſſary for any than *this Nation*; upon which conſideration I hope the Reader will think it no unpardonable digreſſion, if we awhile turn aſide after it.

IT is the *affirmation of our Bleſſed Saviour*, that *where much is given, there ſhall be much requir'd*; a thing ſo conſonant with natural Equity, that we all give our ſuffrage to it, by making it the meaſure of our expectations in ſecular things, wherein every man looks for *returns* proportionable to his *expence* or Induſtry. The Husbandman expects a *Crop* anſwerable to his *Seed* and *Labour*: and in the nobler *cultures* of the Mind, we juſtly exact of our Pupils to let their *manners* atteſt the *diſcipline* they have been under: According to which eſtimate we muſt reſolve, that Gods expectations

ſtations from *us* of *this Nation* cannot but be very high, there being no people under the Sun, whom he has more ſignaliz'd as *his own immediate* care, on whom the *Divine Oeconomy* has more conſtantly and even ſolicitouſly attended in all the variety of ſeaſonable and powerful *applications*.

I SHALL not aſſume the work of a *Chronicle*, by giving a ſeries of all thoſe mercies, we receiv'd in the loins of our Anceſtors; and of which we have provided one unhappy memorial, I mean our nauſeating and deſpiſing them; it having been the buſineſs of our days, to diſentail thoſe two moſt ineſtimable Bleſſings, of a *pure Religion* and *outward Peace*, which our immediate Progenitors left us; and to derive to our poſterity the contrary miſchiefs of impiety and confuſion.

BUT not to ravel ſo far back, I ſhall confine my reflections to ſo late a date, that I ſhall not need to beſpeak the faith afforded to *Hiſtorians*; ſcarce any that can be my *Reader*, but is qualified to be my *witneſs* too; and muſt acknowledge that there has on Gods part been no Method wanting, that might purifie us to himſelf *a Peculiar people zealous of good works*. To that end of refining and cleanſing us it was, that he kept us ſo long in the *furnace*, permitted us to thoſe many *Fiery trials* of our late calamitous days. 'Twere impertinent here to give a Deſcription of *thoſe ſufferings*, which every mans Memory can ſo readily repreſent to him; or to paint that *Flame* whoſe ſcorchings we have felt; 'tis enough to ſay, that *God* appear'd

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in them, earneſtly induſtrious to have reduced us; like *a skilful Captain* beſieg'd us cloſely, ſtraitned us ſo in all our intereſts, that it was ſcarce poſſible for us to fly any where but to himſelf. Indeed he that would make up an exact Catalogue of our Calamities, muſt calculate in how many inſtances humane nature may be paſſive; there being ſcarce any of our ſuffering capacities, to which they were not liberally apportioned, our *Eſtates*, our *Perſons*, our *Friends*, and which is more than all our *Conſciences*, all groaning under the weight of that *Yoke*, which our own Sins prepar'd, and other mens ſins put on. Which way ſoever we look't, we ſaw nothing but that which might conſume our *Eyes* and grieve our *Heart*: If on the Church, we ſaw that torn by *Schiſm*, ſpoil'd by *Sacriledge*; the abomination of deſolation ſtanding in the Holy place, and the *houſe of Prayer* made in the moſt literal ſenſe *a den of Thieves*. If on the State, we ſaw the *breath* of our Noſtrils, the *Anointed of the Lord* taken in their *Pits*, *Impriſon'd*, and *Arraign'd*, and barbarouſly *Murder'd*, by thoſe who ſlew him, like the *Heir* in the Goſpel, that they might ſeize on his *Inheritance*. We ſaw this and all other Miſchiefs eſtabliſht *by a Law*, and made as irreverſible as powerful malice could render them. And now in ſuch a diſtreſs, who would not think that ſuch a neceſſity ſhould have become our vertue? and ſo perfect a deſtitution compell'd our reſort to the Divine aid? And as little oppreſt States us'd to make themſelves homagers to the *Romans*,

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to engage their protection ſo we ſhould have made an entire ſurrendry of our ſelves to *God*, that we might have gain'd a title to his reſcues and deliverances.

THIS genuine and kindly effect I doubt not but it had in *ſome*, I would fain think in *many*; but we are not now conſidering *particulars*, but the *community*; and therefore how ſincere ſoever ſuch perſonal reformations were, they muſt not come under the account of publick and general, unleſs for their Number and Eminency they had been ſufficient to have overwhelmed the contrary perverſeneſs: Many there might be whoſe hearts (as 'tis ſaid of *Joſiahs*, 2 *Chron.* 34. 27.) did melt, and yet the far greater number of the obdurate, ſtill juſtly denominate us *a ſtiff neck'd people*; an Epithet wherewith God often reproaches the *Jews*, and ſure we have no leſs evidenced our title to it; for alas, as if we had meant to revenge the inexorableneſs of our oppreſſors towards us, in our obſtinacy to God; as if when we could keep nothing elſe, we had yet reſerv'd this ſullen comfort, of having our hearts impregnable, we made a ſhift to hold out againſt all theſe batteries; there was little *appearance*, and leſs *reality* of Repentance; and if ſome of our *luſts* were at all leſs raging, 'twas only becauſe they were ſtarved into a little tameneſs, the *ſupplies* cut off which ſhould maintain our Riot: but when any recruits could be had, they were devoted that way, & even in the worſt of times we miſt not to be as luxurious as we were able: and as though we reſolv'd

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that *vice* like the *Sea*, ſhould gain in one part what it loſt in another; we took order that what was thus inevitably defaulkt from thoſe *expenſive* Sins, ſhould be made up in the *cheaper*: we could curſe, and ſwear, & blaſpheme in ſpight of *Sequeſtration*, and this wretched Immunity we made abundant uſe of, till we even became *Proverbial* for it; and gave our enemies pretence to faſten it on us as our diſtinctive Character. Yet to ſhew our ſelves generous ſinners, there was *one vice* we bought at a dear rate, I mean our as imprudent, as unchriſtian animoſities, and *picques* among our ſelves; a ſin that helpt to revenge all the reſt: and was as well upon a humane, as divine account, a grand inſtrument of our *ruine*. To theſe we may add our impatient murmurs at our ſufferings, which did in ſome work ſo prepoſterouſly, as to reconcile them to the inflicters, made them unworthily deſert that cauſe, they found chargeable to maintain, and contrary to the advice of *Solomon*, Chuſe the ways of thoſe oppreſſors whoſe proſperity they envied, *Prov.* 3. But of theſe *real Apoſtates* the number I hope was not great, I wiſh I could ſay ſo alſo of thoſe *ſeeming deſertors*, whoſe knees bowed to *Baal*, though their hearts did not: who belied their own *loyalty*, and in a ſhew of compliance proſtituted *conſcience* in ſeveral Engagements as inconſiſtent with each other, as they all were with duty; and ſuch as they pretended no excuſe for their *taking*, but their reſolutions of *breaking*. It was indeed a ſad ſpectacle to ſee what ſholes every menacing Edict

Edict brought in; while men ran in as much haſte to take the opportunity of *Perjury*, as the Primitive Chriſtians were wont to do of *Martyrdom*: Indeed herein we ſeem'd to invade our enemies peculiar, would not ſuffer them to enjoy thoſe marks of diſtinction, they had framed to themſelves; ſo that as far as *Oaths* could ſignifie, we were all *one Party*. And yet while we thus diſclaim'd Gods reliefs by theſe indirect attempts of our own, we took it very ill that he left us to the ſucceſs of them: That he proſper'd not thoſe methods he had interdicted, and made us Triumphant, not only over our Enemies but himſelf too: and upon this ſcore many mutinous *blaſphemies* were utter'd and perhaps ſome more thought, though I confeſs, generally we were not ſo modeſt, as to ſtick at ſaying the worſt we could think; and indeed they that heard the frequent doubts men own'd of Gods juſtice, providence, nay his very being, would not think they ſuppreſt any thing as too ill to be ſpoken: We laid boundleſs expectations upon the juſtice of our *cauſe*, and as if we had extremely oblig'd God by not being *Traitors*, or *Schiſmaticks*, thought he wrong'd us extremely that he made us not *Victors*. *Samuel* tells *Saul*, that *Rebellion was like Witchcraft*; but we ſeem'd to think *Loyalty* was ſo; that like a ſpell it was to keep us invulnerable, not only againſt our enemies but our Selves: and ſo countercharm all our crimes that they ſhould only be active to pleaſe, not hurt us. But if in the laſt place we reflect on our

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ſelves even in relation to that *cauſe* in which we ſo much confided, 'tis to be fear'd all men will not be able to evince they ſuffer'd for *God* and the *King*, though they did it in their *quarrel*: 'tis the intent muſt denominate whoſe *Martyrs* they were, it being too frequent for private paſſions and intereſts, to march under the banner of conſcience; and we call that ſometimes taking up the *Croſs*, which is only the taking up an *animoſity* or *humor*. Indeed 'tis not poſſible for any to be Gods *Martyr*, who is not firſt his *Servant*; none of us will ſuffer the greateſt things for a perſon for whom we will not do the leaſt; and 'tis abſurd Hypocriſie for a man to pretend he has left *all* for God, who we ſee cannot be woed to leave the moſt deſpicable *luſt* for him. He that will not part with the noiſe of a loud *Oath*, the pleaſure of an intemperate *Cup*, the applauſe of a profane *Jeſt* for God, will ſurely much leſs expoſe his *liberty*, his *eſtate*, his *life* for him: and therefore what hazards ſoever any man ran in any of thoſe, he can with no juſtice ſet it upon Gods account, unleſs he can produce ſuch other acts of obedience, as may witneſs this to be true and genuine. And upon this trial, I fear *God*'s *party* will appear to have been but ſmall among us, and perhaps *the King*'s not much greater, it being not very probable that thoſe ſhould have any great ſenſe of duty to *him*, that had none to *God*: or that thoſe ſhould religiouſly revere *one* Commandment, who deſpiſed the other *nine*. But we need not the help of inference and probability in

this matter, the mutinous and inſolent behaviour of many who profeſt loyalty, did too clearly evince it: And as it is ſaid of *Joab*, that he turn'd after *Adonijah*, though he turn'd not after *Abſalom*, 1 *Kings* 2. 28. and ſome of ours had little private rebellions of their own, even while they oppos'd the more publick. I love not to paſs cenſures on mens thoughts, yet I doubt ſome would be too conſcious to confute me, if I ſhould ſay there wanted not thoſe, who owed their *zeal* to their *Spleen*, and did not ſo much love thoſe they fought *for*, as hated thoſe they fought *againſt*. And it may perhaps deſerve enquiry, whether that demure *pretence of holineſs* their Adverſaries had put on, did not more avert ſome of our *Libertines* from them, than all their *real crimes*: They perhaps ſo far miſtook them, as to ſuſpect they might be in earneſt, when they profeſt to advance the *power of Godlineſs*, and at that took an *Alarm*, and ſuch Men (if ſuch there were) contended not for the Liberty of their *Country*, but their *Luſts*; and could with no juſtice, expect either a reputation, or ſucceſs from that cauſe which they at once helpt to defame and defeat. I am loth to go farther, and ſuſpect that even ſome of the devouter ſort were inſpir'd more by the Spirit of *oppoſition* than *Piety*; yet I confeſs 'tis hard to reſiſt that ſurmiſe, when 'tis conſider'd that our *Liturgy* never had its due veneration, but when the *Directory* was ſet up againſt it. Indeed he that ſhall remember how our *private Oratories* were then throng'd and crouded;

crouded; and ſhall now compare it with our *empty Churches*, will be tempted to think our *devotion* was of that ſort, which is excited by *interdict*, and deadned by *invitations*; a perverſe kind of Zeal, kindled only by *Antiperiſtaſis* or colliſion; none of that pure flame which deſcends from heaven. And then as our *Saviour* in another caſe ſays, *If the light that is in thee be darkneſs, how great is that darkneſs? Mat. 6.* If this fairer and more ſpecious part of us were thus reprovable, how obnoxious were the other? And if our Earneſtneſs in a righteous cauſe, by its Siniſter motives or adherencies be unable to juſtifie itſelf, how ſhall it bear that heavier task we laid on it, and plead for our other Guilts.

THIS is the true, though not full account of our behaviour under *Gods Diſcipline*, thus did we fructifie upon his pruning us; brought forth indeed nothing but *degenerous fruit*. The *holy Writ* leaves it as a brand of moſt inveterate Impiety upon *Ahaz*, that *in the time of his diſtreſs he ſinn'd yet more againſt the Lord*, 2 *Chron.* 28. 22. and ſure we have too juſt title to the ſame Character of infamy; thoſe ſufferings which were ſent to chaſtiſe our ſins, ſerv'd but to encreaſe them, and like the *Iſraelites* in the *Brick-kilns*, they multiplied the more for their oppreſſion; we debaucht even our *Executioners*, and made every new *calamity* ſupply us with ſome new *vice*. And now when Gods *rod* was thus deſpis'd, we were in all reaſon to expect he ſhould draw his *ſword*, revenge our re-

ſiſtance of his methods, by ſomewhat we could not reſiſt, make our *Plagues* as obſtinate as our *ſelves*, and involve us in hopeleſs inevitable ruine. *Thu certain fearful looking for of Judgment*, Heb. 10. 27. was all we had left our ſelves, of all the rich patrimony we were once poſſeſt of; and our preſent miſery ſeem'd impoſſible to expire any way but by dying into greater.

BUT as great artificers are us'd to magnifie their Art, by chuſing the moſt unlikely materials; ſo did it pleaſe God in this total indiſpoſedneſs of ours, when we were ſo unapt ſubjects to illuſtrate his mercy, and as if he deſign'd this *national deliverance* ſhould (in its proportion) be the Tranſcript of our more *univerſal redemption*, he viſited us not only in this ſtate of miſery, but enmity; when we had ſet our ſelves in defiance of his *judgments*, he laid as it were an Ambuſh of *mercy* for us, and ſurpris'd us with ſafety: by ſuch undiſcernible ways *return'd the captivity of our Sion*, that *we were* indeed delivered *like them that dream*, *Pſal.* 126. 1. gave us a *victory* without a *war*; without the intervention of *garments rolled in bloud*, *Eſay* 9. 5. inveſted us in our Triumphant robes, and in a word, made us inſenſibly to glide into our long forgotten proſperity.

AND now who can imagine, but this miraculous Mutation *without* us, muſt alſo work a Change *within* us? Indeed they muſt have a very ill opinion of humane nature, that can think it poſſible it ſhould have perverſeneſs enough to reſiſt ſuch endearments; ſuch kindly Heat muſt needs

needs be ſuppos'd to melt us; and if before our Pride diſdain'd to be *compell'd*, yet even that ſtubbornneſt part of us cannot object againſt the being *courted into amendment*. So that when God has thus yielded to our terms, left us not ſo much as a *Punctilio* in our way to Piety, 'tis but a reaſonable expectation we ſhould *embrace* it with as great an Earneſtneſs, as it was formerly *rejected* by us.

AND would God we could ſay we did ſo; but alas, we ſtill affect prodigies, take a kind of wanton Joy in defeating Gods deſigns, and as if we aſpired to vye Miracles with him, have made our *returns* as unparallel'd as his *mercies*; ſo that the ſum of our account is this. No Nation was ever more ſignaliz'd by *Gods goodneſs*, or its *own perverſeneſs*, it being hard to determine in which of thoſe reſpects it is moſt *eminent*. That this is in the general perfectly true, there are too many particulars ready to teſtifie, indeed a whole cloud of Witneſſes do concur to the proving the charge. I ſhall not undertake to examine *all*, yet *ſome* of the principal it will not be amiſs to take notice of.

BEFORE we enquire into the *uſe* we have made of Gods Mercies, let us a little conſider what our *ſenſe* of them is; and ſure of all the *interrogatories* we can put to our ſelves, this appears the *eaſieſt*, the moſt gentle favourable Teſt, that even our own partialities could elect for us; it being ſo natural to men in miſery to value a reſcue, and celebrate their deliverers, that the

contrary would be the only wonder; we ſee even the *Jews*, who were none of the moſt malleable people, yet *deliverances* made impreſſions on them, ſet them to their *devout proceſſions* and *ſolemn hymns* in praiſe of God: nay ſuch a piece of native Religion is this, that the *Heathens* exemplifie it to us. The *Philiſtines* when they had taken *Sampſon*, magnified their *Dagon*, as having *delivered their enemy and the deſtroyer of their countrey into their hands*, *Judg.* 16. 24. So upon the victory over *Saul*, 1 *Sam.* 31. 9. *they ſent round about to publiſh it in the houſe of their Idols.* And in all ſtories we find, the *Heathen Altars* were never ſo loaden with *Sacrifices*, as upon ſuch occaſions: and the Goſpel tells us, that thoſe on whom Chriſt beſtowed miraculous cures, were ſo tranſported with them, that their gratitude ſupplanted their obedience, and made them notwithſtanding his prohibition, proclaim the wonders he had done for them: But I fear if we reflect upon our ſelves, we ſhall not be able to match any of theſe inſtances. 'Tis true our late *change* was entertain'd with a Joy *profuſe* enough, but not enough *religious*. We ſaw that great things were done for us, and thereof we rejoyced; but we did not ſo much conſider that the *Lord* had done them, *Pſal.* 114. and ſo were rather affected with the *rarity* and *profitableneſs*, than the *mercy* and *kindneſs* of the Diſpenſation: and though the care of our *Governours* have provided for the religious part alſo, aſſign'd *days of Purim* for the perpetual commemoration of our *deliverance*,

yet

yet our ſlight obſervance of them does too fully evince our Joy was merely ſecular; and ſurely he that obſerv'd the numerous and loud *acclamations* in the *ſtreets*, and the few faint *Hallelujahs* in the *Temple*, muſt needs ſay they were very diſproportionate, and that how much ſoever the moſt of us rejoyc't, it was not in the *Lord*: and then we are not to wonder that it was ſo tranſient; ſince it was merely *earthly*, it muſt needs partake of the fadingneſs of its *original*: whereas had we deriv'd it higher, it would have been *laſting* and *durable*; it could not ſo ſuddenly have expir'd, had we fetcht it from him, *in whoſe preſence is fulneſs of joy, and at whoſe right hand are pleaſures for evermore*. But alas, our tranſports were ſuch as exhauſted themſelves in their own noiſe, we expreſt our Joy in *Bonfires*, and it vapour'd away in the *ſmoke*; there wanted that mixture of Piety which ſhould have fix'd that *volatile Paſſion*, and we who at firſt were much more glad than thankful, within a very ſhort time ceaſed to be either.

AND then as *violent Heats* when once expir'd, are ſucceeded by the *extremeſt Cold*; ſo has it fared with us; we fell from our *Extaſies* not to the mean, but the contrary extreme; our vaſt complacencies at their parting, carried with them even ordinary contentation, and left us not only joyleſs, but impatient. It was indeed matter of Equal ſhame and wonder, to ſee a ſcene ſo ſuddenly chang'd, wherein as in many other inſtances, we ſeem'd to have tranſcrib'd the co-

py of the mutinous *Iſraelites*, whom we find in the very ſame Chapter, *Exod.* 15. triumphing and repining; and no ſooner were the Timbrels out of their *hands*, but Complaints were in their *mouths*, *verſe* 24. *What ſhall we drink?* And in the beginning of the next, with the ſame querulous importunity they require meat. But not to wrong them in the compariſon, their Murmurs had ſome extenuating circumſtances which ours have not; they look't indeed with ſome appetite upon *Ægypt*, and made ſome propoſals of Return, but it was while they ſuffered the hardſhips of the *wilderneſs*; they preferr'd a repleted *ſlavery*, before a hungry *freedom*; but even they were not ſo frantick in their mutinies, as to make any ſuch offer in *Canaan*, or have any Emulation to the *Garlick* and *Onions*, amidſt the affluence of *Milk* and *Honey*: No 'tis we Alone that have the unhappy skill of reconciling the ſins of *Canaan*, and the *Wilderneſs*; murmur as much under our *Vines* and *Fig-trees*, as at *Rephidim*, or *Marah*, and make all the out-cries of *want* and *ſlavery*, whileſt we wallow in the utmoſt luxury of *plenty* and *freedom*. I need not here ſpecifie the particulars of our Murmurings, this diſcourſe being not likely to find many whoſe innocence will need that information, this *malignant humor* having ſpread ſo, that 'tis now become almoſt a ſcandalous (becauſe a ſingular) thing to be contented. And certainly a conſideringForeiner, that ſhould come among us, could not but be aſtoniſht to ſee a Nation ſo full of all thoſe things which uſe to create tem-

temporal ſatisfactions, and yet to find no body in it ſatisfied; to ſee many parties among us, and none proſperous. This is ſuch a riddle as would tempt a man to ſuſpect his *ſenſes*, and think we had all this while but dreamt of a *reſtoration*: been under the deluſion the *Prophet* deſcribes of the *hungry and thirſty man, that at his waking finds he is empty, and his ſoul hath appetite*, *Eſay* 29. 8. 'Tis a ſad, but viſible truth, that all that God has done for us, hath been ſo far from filling our deſires, that it has only ſerv'd to enlarge them: for I appeal to any of our loudeſt mutineers, whether if ſome years ſince the preſent ſtate of affairs had been repreſented to them, dreſt in the worſt circumſtances they now complain of, they would not then have thought it extremely amiable, worth *Rachels* prize of ſeven years more hardſhip; nay whether they would not willingly have made ſome abatements, relinquiſht part of what they now enjoy, to have had the reſt ſecur'd? And when God has granted us all we *then* askt, ſhall we murmur becauſe we could *now* perhaps ask ſomething more; and like ingrate Debtors, pick a quarrel to evade payment? Was it not enough that he engag'd his *Omnipotence* for us, but muſt his *Omniſcience* alſo be preſt upon the ſame ſervice? And provide all he could foreſee we would wiſh? Alas, do we think we have the ſame hank upon God that ſome Gallants have on their truſting Merchants, that upon Peril of loſing all former ſcores, he muſt ſtill go on to ſupply us? Shall we think nothing

thing fit for oblivion but our obligations? And in this perverſe ſenſe tranſcribe S. *Paul*, *Phil.* 3. 13. *forgetting thoſe things which are behind, reach forward to the things that are before*: this indeed too fully ſpeaks us the off-ſpring of our firſt Parents; we can find no guſt in all the fruits of *Paradiſe*, if any one be denied us; and ſtill look not on what we *have*, but what we *want*; and as it is obſerv'd of the greedier ſort of creatures, that they reliſh not one bit for the vehement expectation of another: So is it with us, we *devour*, but do not *enjoy* our Bleſſings; and to require him to ſatisfie us, is to aſſign him the *Poets* Hell, ſet him with *Belus* daughters to the task of filling a *ſieve* with water, or rolling *Syſiphus*'s ſtone; our growing appetites ſtill keeping us empty and reſtleſs amidſt all endeavours to make us otherwiſe; ſo that whereas God uſes to commit his *favours* to Men, as *ſeed* to the Earth, in expectation of an *harveſt*, ſome fruits of gratitude and obedience; they ſeem with us rather to be flung into a *Gulph*, whoſe property is only to *ſwallow*, never to *fructifie*.

I KNOW mens *Minds* are ſo poſſeſt with their diſcontents, our daily mutinous blaſts have puft up and ſwelled our grievances to ſuch a vaſtneſs, that he muſt expect to be very impatiently heard, that ſhall attempt to repreſent them in a leſſer ſize; yet ſure 'twere not impoſſible even upon a direct view, to demonſtrate them very *light* and *moderate*: but upon a comparative, perfectly *trivial* and *inconſiderable*; and 'tis a little

little ſtrange, that we who bare our *late ſuffering eſtate* with ſo much Impatience, ſhould not have impreſſions enough left in our memory, to confront to all our *preſent regrets*. Do we not quietly now poſſeſs the fruits of our own, or our Progenitors *induſtry*, without danger of any Sequeſtration, but what our own Luxuries inflict? Are not our *Perſons* at freedom; deliver'd from that kind word, and unkind thing, SECURING? So that when we riſe in the Morning, we need not fear our next lodging ſhall be in the *Goal* or dungeon; nor when we ſit down to our Meal, ſuſpect the intruſion of *arm'd uninvited Gueſts*, who ere whiles, we know, were wont to ſurpriſe us, as the Plague did the *Iſraelites, even while the meat was yet in our mouths*; are not our Lives under the cuſtody of known *Laws*, ſo that no man is in danger that will but keep himſelf within thoſe *Boundaries*; nor need fear to be mockt into his grave by ſhews and Pageantries of Juſtice? And beſides theſe real *eſcapes* from *ſlavery*, are we not reſcued from the moſt imbittering circumſtance of it, the having *ſervants rule over us*? A thing which rendred our ſubjection as mean and ſervile, as it was ſharp and preſſing, and which we were *then* ſo ſenſible of, that it never miſt to *bring up the rear* of our Complaints. Laſtly, if we reflect upon our higher ſpiritual concerns, are we not freed from thoſe boiſtrous robuſt *temptations*, which with the violence of Famine and Sword, Beggary and Death aſſaulted our *conſtancy*, and left no mean between Martyr-

Martyrdom and Apoſtaſie? Are we not alſo reſtor'd to all thoſe ſpiritual advantages which we once profeſt ſo much to value? That *well of life* now lies open before us, after which we once panted like the *Hart* after the *water-ſprings*; our ancient *worſhip* is revived, and wants only our attendance to make it ſolemn; whereas the *abomination of Deſolation* ſtood in the holy place, our prayers were turned to ſin; needed, but were denied the *Liturgy* to pray againſt them, or atone their guilts. We have no longer *ſtones* given us for *bread*, nor experiment that ſad riddle, of being at once cloyed and ſtarved; amidſt exceſs of preaching ſuffering a Famine of the Word. And now are all theſe worth no regard? If they are not, why did we exclaim ſo loudly when we wanted them? If they are; why are we ſtill as querulous now we have them? 'Tis ſure, theſe include all our great and ſubſtantial intereſts as men, and Chriſtians, and thoſe being provided for, 'tis not eaſily imaginable what others we ſhould have important enough to make us querulous, unleſs it be thoſe of Paſſion and Humour. One mans *ambition* perhaps wants a ſatisfaction, another mans *avarice*, a thirds *ſpleen*; and this *diſcord* makes up the very unmuſical Harmony of our *murmurs*. If we ſee but a *Mordecai* in the Kings gate whom we wiſh removed, we can like *Haman* find no guſt in any thing we enjoy. If we ſee ſome, who we think have born leſs of the burden and heat of the day, rewarded equally or perhaps above our ſelves, we are ſure to make out the Parable,

rable, by murmuring at the good man of the houſe: Or if *Nineveh* be ſpar'd, if all be not executed to whom we have denounc'd deſtruction, we like *Jonah* ſit down in a ſullen diſcontent, and grow weary of our lives, becauſe others are permitted to enjoy theirs. To theſe and other heads of the like nature, 'tis apparent our *grievances* may be reduced; and then if the balance be put into any diſpaſſionate hand, 'tis ſure they can never become a counterpoize to the other real benefits we enjoy, but will in the *Prophets* phraſe, appear *lighter than vanity and nothing*.

BUT I ſuppoſe ſome will ſay, 'tis not only *preſent* uneaſineſſes of which they are impatient, but the poſſibility of *future*, a fear of relapſing into our former eſtate by the ill managery of our preſent: To theſe I ſhall anſwer, That admit it were ſo, yet ſure 'twill be no wiſdom to anticipate our miſeries, to foreſtall diſcontents, and make foreſight as painful as actual ſuffering. In other forbidden inſtances we chuſe to enjoy the preſent, and with an *Epicurean* Indifferency cry, *Let us eat and drink for to morrow we die*, 1 *Cor.* 15. 32. How is it that we here become ſo unluckily ſagacious, unleſs it be that murmuring is a Senſuality we count equivalent, nay ſuperior to all rational ſatisfactions; and therefore that we may have no intermiſſion of that delight, ſuborn our phancies to find occaſions, and fetch in from the future thoſe ſupplies which the preſent affords not: But beſides this, I ſhould in the ſecond place ask theſe great *Diviners*, why they do not alſo

alſo foreſee, that this very *mutinous temper* of theirs is the moſt direct and infallible means of bringing thoſe *miſchiefs* they pretend to fear; that it is ſo, is moſt evident, and ſo well obſerv'd by our *Adverſaries*, that there is little doubt, they have not only pleaſure, but deſigns upon it; and to that purpoſe have their *Engins* on work to blow up the *hot Spirits* among us, in expectation from thence to raiſe a *flame*. So blind a thing is *Paſſion*, that it hurries on to the things which in their iſſue we moſt abhor; makes us our Enemies *drudges*, and the *forgers* of our own ſhackles; and whileſt we cry out of petty Indulgences, we our ſelves give them in the *lump*, what we grudge them in *parcels*: This is a miſerable infatuation, and while we act thus unreaſonably, we are ſure no competent declamers againſt ill managery. But beſides this natural effect of our murmurs, we are alſo to remember that there is a Divine vengeance attending it: when *bounties* and *largeſſes* are quarrell'd at, we neceſſitate God to another Method, nay indeed, not only his *vengeance*, but even his *kindneſs* ſeems to ſuggeſt it; when he ſees our conſtitutions ſuch, that his gentle applications work contrary effects, 'tis very apposite for him to try whether the *Antiperiſtaſis* will operate on the other ſide; if we ſmart thus under *lenitives*, 'tis but fit to eſſay, if *corroſives* will eaſe us; and the only remaining experiment for the making us *happy*, is to make us *miſerable*.

BUT would God we might yet prevent the need of ſuch unkindly *expedients*, and by a ſober eſtimate,

eſtimate, and thankful ſenſe of what we have, provide to conſerve it: not faſtidiouſly deſpiſe great and eminent *bleſſings*, becauſe perhaps they come not home to every part of our *wiſhes*. Alas, thoſe plenary ſatisfactions agree not with the nature of Earthly things: 'Tis an obſervation long ſince rais'd from the Globular and Triangular form of the World and our Hearts, that 'tis impoſſible the one ſhould be filled with the other, there will ſtill be ſome angles, ſome vacuities left; our very *acceſſions* create new *wants*, and like an unſound limb, the healing of *one* Sore is the breaking out of *another*. Every thing under the *Moon* partakes of her *viciſſitudes*, augments and decreaſes only with this difference, that though their *wains* be to as low a degree as hers, they never are perfectly *at the full*. There never was, nor never will be a State here completely happy: And as the *Philoſopher* handſomly reproacht the impatience of the *Perſian* King for the death of his Wife, by undertaking to revive her, if he could help him but to the names of *three* men that had never griev'd to write upon her *Tomb*; ſo ſurely we may make the like offer to our *malecontents*, and engage to redeem all their uneaſineſſes, if they can point us out (I ſay not three, but) *one age* wherein there were no *complaints*. What then are our clamorous Repinings, but ſo many loud *invectives* againſt Gods *decree*; a Deſire to ſubvert his fundamental *Law*, and confound the *diſtinction* he has irreverſibly ſet between our *Earthly* and our *Heavenly* ſtate? And alas,

alas, What mad inſolence is this, to expect that the whole *Oeconomy* of the world muſt be chang'd only to humour us? That God muſt replant us a *Paradiſe*, pluck up every one of the Briers and Thorns which were our native curſe? Nay, bring down *Heaven* to us, and enſtate us in undiſturb'd unmix'd felicities? This is indeed ſimply conſidered a very wild expectation, but yet more ſo, when 'tis conſidered how we qualifie our ſelves for ſuch a priviledge: for let me ask, are we as eager to anticipate the *holineſs*, as the *happineſs* of Heaven? Do we as paſſionately deſire to do *Gods* will, as that God ſhould do *ours*? And emulate the *Angelical obedience* and purity, as much as *bliß*? Theſe are Interrogatories which need no verbal Anſwer, our lives do too fully reſolve them in the negative; and then how ſhameleſs a partiality is it, thus to carve to our ſelves, and chuſe out of either ſtate what we beſt like, reſerve all the *ſenſualities* of this world, and yet cry out for the *impaſſibleneſs* of the next; but alas, theſe are pretenſions as inconſiſtent as they are bold, our *vices* having ſuch a native inſeparable adherency of *pain* and *vexation*, that 'tis not the moſt dexterous managery of a ſin that can ever ſever them, but if we will retain the *one*, we muſt the *other* alſo: A Truth which might be exemplified to us throughout the whole *Catalogue* even of ſenſual ſins; but it is moſt eminently viſible in this of *murmuring*, which ſtays not as others do to take Pain at the *rebound*, and by way of reſult; but has it as its firſt *Element* and principle; it being it-

ſelf

ſelf almoſt as great a pain, as any it can betray us to: and yet to ſecure an advance and *perpetuity* of Torment, every Event ſerves to foment and heighten it, and the moſt deſperate things are equally combuſtible to that *flame*. Indeed he that is poſſeſt with that humour, has a kind of fury within him, that will never let him reſt: And alas, what *Legions* of ſuch evil Spirits are now among us? How are we as it were inſpir'd with *Mutiny*, it being the *univerſal dialect* of the Nation; and of many in it, who cannot be ſuppos'd to found it in any obſervation of their own, but are led by the *common genius*, and bellow rather by conſent with the reſt of the herd, than for any uneaſineſs, at leaſt of *injuſtice* and *oppreſſion* (for ſuch only give pretence for *Mutiny*) that themſelves feel. And ſince 'tis become a *Plebeian vice*, would God our *Gentry* would uſe it as they do their *faſhions*, and leave it off (if for no better reaſon) for its being *vulgar*: And indeed 'twere but equitable, that thoſe who have taken up ſo many ſins upon *punctilio*, ſhould for once lay down one upon the ſame ſcore. The *Athenian* State put down their *Oſtraciſm* (which otherwiſe they were fond enough of) becauſe it was debaſed, by happening to fall on *Hyperbolus*, a deſpicable and abject perſon: and there ſeems not much difference in the caſes, ſave only that we are more tenacious of *Sins*, than they of *Puniſhments*; and I fear we ſhall ſo long retain this, till we find it its own *Lictor*, not only in the *preſent uneaſineſs*, but in that more *fruitful harveſt* of Miſchiefs, where-

of it has now ſown the ſeeds. We ſee here what our thankfulneſs is, for thoſe eminent miraculous mercies we have receiv'd, and the account of that is an unhappy *ſpecimen*, what we are like to finde, when we ſurvey the uſes we have made of them, which God knows have been ſo unnatural and perverſe, as does too fully parallel the former inſtance.

FOR firſt, if we reflect upon our *ſpiritual bleſſings*, what has the enjoyment of thoſe advantages produced, but the contempt of them; we have an eaſie free acceſs to God in his Sanctuary, our *Churches* are no longer *Garriſons* to keep out the worſhip, to which they were devoted, but like *hoſpitable doors*, are open to the regular piety of any that will enter. And now we have this liberty, now the *flaming ſword* is removed, we have loſt all appetite to the *Tree of life*, can willingly let thoſe *Everlaſting gates* (as the *Pſalmiſt* ſtyles them) *Pſal.* 24. *ſtand* as everlaſtingly *open*, ere we enter them: And though the Fabricks are by Gods providence reſcued from their duſt and ruines, yet many of us endeavour to reduce them to a yet worſe deſolation, ſtrive to depopulate thoſe ſacred Manſions, and execute againſt them that *prophetick threat* concerning *Nineveh*, *Nahum*, 1. *Leave them empty, void and waſte.* And indeed ſo they are, if not in an abſolute, yet in a Comparative ſenſe; for could we at any time of *Divine Service* make an eſtimate of *all* the perſons that are abſent, 'twould ſcarce be diſcern'd that *any* are there; were all corners ranſackt, what a multitude

multitude of *Recuſants* ſhould we find upon a far differing account from that of Conſcience? Some we ſhould ſee ſtretching themſelves upon their beds, keeping a Sabbath indeed, but to their *ſloth*, not their *God*; others perhaps we may find rous'd from their Coaches, upon the ſummons not of *Religion* but *Vanity*; ſome new garment is to be fitted, ſome exotick dreſs eſſayed, and they who grudge *one hour* to the Preachers glaſs, can ſpend *many* at their own; where they are ſo taken up with their *Idolatries* to themſelves, that they think of no other worſhip; nay, as the world goes, 'twere well this were the worſt diverſion, that ſome did not keep from Church, that they might in the interim, defile thoſe leſſer Temples of God they carry about them, and cut themſelves off from the Communion of *Chriſts body*, to make themſelves *members of an Harlot*: or that others were not *Bacchus* his Votaries when they ſhould be *Gods*, ſpend that time in their frantick revels, and ſing a *Dithrambick* inſtead of *Te Deum*. As for the *Mammoniſt*, if he keep any holy day, 'tis like the *Iſraelites* to his *Gods of Gold*, *Exod.* 32. 31. He is looking with veneration on his Idoliz'd treaſure, numbring thoſe bags he dares not uſe, or perhaps with a more active Zeal purſuing the means of encreaſing them. Thus alas, may we go from one to another, and as it was in *Ezekiels* viſion, ſee ſtill greater abominations, *Ezek.* 8. And certainly that All-ſeeing Eye, which diſcerns what multitudes do thus buſie themſelves, at the times even of his ſolemn-

eſt worſhip, cannot but adjudge us moſt profane deſpiſers of his mercy in reſtoring it: Yet would to God 'twere only the *abſent* upon whom that ſentence would fall; but alas, the behaviour of many in the Church does too loudly teſtifie how little of devotion brings them thither, and at how mean a rate they value all that is done there: Thoſe *Eyes* which there ſhould wait on God, as thoſe *of a Servant on the hands of his Maſter*, *Pſal.* 123. 2. are rolling about to fetch in all the vanities and temptations which can occur to them, and look *every way*, but *towards Heaven*. Our *Tongues* which ſhould be toucht with a Coal from the Altar, devoted wholly to Hymns and Prayers, are buſied in *private Colloquies* with thoſe about us: Buſineſs, News, nay, all the impertinent chat of our moſt vacant hours, is then taken up to entertain us; ſo that he who would know the *talk of the Town* or neighborhood, need go neither to Exchange nor Market, the *Church* will as certainly ſupply him: And this ill employment of our *Tongues*, engages the like of our *Ears*, which when they ſhould be hearkening what the Lord God will ſay concerning us, are liſtening to thoſe *vain diſcourſes* we hold with one another; from all which outward indecencies we may too ſurely collect the inward irreverence of our heart. And is it poſſible that this ſhould now be the Temper of *thoſe*, who not long ſince ſeem'd to bewail their *excluſion* from thoſe ſacred Aſſemblies? Did we long for *them* as *David* for the *waters of Bethlehem*, when they appear'd unattainable,

able, and when they are brought to us, refuse to taste them, pour them out not as he did in *devotion*, but in *contempt*? 'Tis true indeed, in *temporal* Delights *possession* usually proves a nauseating thing, and takes off our *appetite*; but it uses not to be so in *spiritual*, whose peculiar property it is, not to satiate, but excite by fruition: But alas, though the Things we converse with are *spiritual*, our Hearts are *carnal*, and that is the cause why instead of crying out with the *Psalmist*, *When shall I come to appear in the presence of God*, *Psal.* 42. We, like those in *Malachy*, Chap. 1. 13. *Snuff at his service, and say, What a weariness is it?* A weariness indeed it appears in the literal sense with many, who sleep at it as men over-labour'd, and scarce take so sound repose in their own houses as in Gods; indeed such is the variety of rude behaviour that is there us'd, that should an *unbeliever* come into our Assemblies, he must surely (as St. *Paul* supposes in another case, 1 *Cor.* 14. 23.) say, *we are mad*; to see some gazing, some whispering, some laughing, others sleeping, and perhaps the far fewer number praying; is such a *medly*, as the most brutish *Idolaters* never admitted in their *worships*; and the way of worshipping *Mercury*, by throwing stones, or *Hercules* by cursing, is a sober and decent kind of service compar'd with this. And now alas, when will the *Church* recover its ancient Title, and become the *house of prayer*? 'Tis sure according to the present appearance it may have many more proper names, that being the least part of the bu-

ſineſs done in it: 'Tis true, there are ſome that make it a *Sanctuary*, but 'tis only againſt the penalties of the *Law*, or reproach of arrant *Atheiſm*; they come to ſave their money or their credit; others perhaps ſhun the ſolitarineſs of being at home, and come not as to a place of *Devotion*, but *Concourſe*; and 'tis to be doubted, ſome viſit that place as they do many others, becauſe they have nothing elſe to do: They want their week-days diverſion, and ſo are driven thither upon mere deſtitution of more grateful entertainments; make it a kind of *Sunday play-houſe*, ſit there as Spectators or Judges, to ſee the *company*, or cenſure the *Preacher*, but never remember that themſelves have any other part to act; or are beheld by *Him*, who will not always be patient of ſuch profanation; but will, as the *Scripture* ſpeaks, *Repay them to their face, who thus contemn him to his.* We know among men, every one counts his Houſe his fortreſs; and an Affront offered him *there*, doubles the Injury, and is not only a *contempt*, but an *invaſion*: and ſhall it not be a proportionable enhanſement with *God* alſo, thus to defie him *within his own doors*, and approach his preſence in an impious bravery, the more fully to ſhew him how little we regard him? At this rate while we addreſs our ſelves, we may as ill manner'd Gueſts be *forbid his houſe*: Interrogated by God as the *Jews* were, *Iſa.* 1. *Why doeſt thou tread my Courts?* A total abandoning of Worſhip being more fair & ingenuous than ſuch Devotion: wherein like the *barbarous ſouldiers*,

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we bring Christ a *Scepter*, only to *smite* him on the head with it; and make a preface of *homage*, to give our selves the sport of the *mockery*: nay, 'tis sadly to be fear'd, that God may *thrust* us out of his House, *shut* his Doors against us, *rescue* his Service and himself from our profanation, and put us again under the same, (or a worse interdict than that) which lately lay upon us.

HAVING now seen our scandalous Irreverence towards Gods worship in *general*, 'tis too easie to make Application to the *several parts* of it; every one of which must necessarily partake of the contempt which falls upon the whole; for while we bring no thoughts but *secular* with us; those are equally disagreeing to all the *Divine* offices: 'twill be needless therefore to trace our wandrings in each of those, since our whole *behaviour* in the Church is one great *deviation* from the business we should come about: yet that supersedes not to every guilty person himself the necessity of a more distinct and particular reflection. 'Tis sure at the *last dreadful Audit*, we must account for every of those spiritual advantages we have abus'd; and alas, what a *dismal reckoning* will many of us have then to give up, when our *prayers* which we now turn into Sin, shall be turn'd into *perdition*? And we *Who* would not supplicate our *God*, shall in vain invoke the *mountains and hills to hide us from the face of the lamb*, when that Word which we now so fastidiously despise, that it must be drest up in the colours of humane Rhetorick, to make us at all pa-

tient of it, and becomes then only tolerable to us, when it is fartheſt removed from being Gods: when *that word*, as our *Saviour* ſpeaks, *ſhall judge us*, and that gracious *invitation to life* end in that fatal ſentence, *Go ye curſed*. Nay, when our very Propitiation ſhall *plead* againſt us, and the crucified Body of our Saviour, which we have *in Effigie* ſo often recrucified in our unworthy approaches, or impious neglect of the holy *Euchariſt*, ſhall *witneſs* againſt us as its *murderers*, when we ſhall be found not *ſprinkled* as with the blood of a *ſacrifice*, but *imbrued* as with that of *ſlaughter*: when all theſe means of our ſalvation, ſhall thus miſerably convert, and from the *ſavour of life*, become that *unto death*, 2 *Cor.* 2. 16. then we ſhall to our amazement find, how differing our eſtimates of them were from Gods; and in his vengeance read the value he put upon them. What then have we now to do, but to anticipate our *dooms-day*, and *judge our ſelves that we may not be judg'd of the Lord*: To make an impartial account of all theſe our profanations, and accuſe our ſelves before his *mercy-ſeat*, that ſo we may prevent the arraignment at his *bar of Judgement*. And as Offenders are uſually enjoyn'd to acknowledge their guilts in the very places where they committed them; ſo let us make the *Church* the Scene of our *penitence*, as we have of our *faults*: By our ſtrong crying and tears, deprecate our former indevotion, and by an exemplary Reverence, redreſs the ſcandal of our Profaneneſs. This, and only this is the way to ſecure us againſt

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the *final* Vengeance of these sins; nay, and against the *intermedial* also: for we are not to expect that so unkind abuse of mercy shall be wholly respited to another world, it being so exasperating a *crime*, as must in all probability awake Gods *fury*, and pull down present Judgments. I wish the Event do not too soon attest the reasonableness of this supposal.

IF from our *spiritual* Blessings, we now descend to our *temporal*, we shall not appear much better managers of those; they being generally employed to purposes the most distant from those, for which they were given. And first for our *peace*, that great comprehensive enjoyment, upon which all others are dependent, and which is to our *civil* Capacities, the same that *health* is to our *natural*; the thing by which we relish and taste the rest of our comforts, we may from the Song of *Zachary*, *Luke* 1. learn for what intent God bestows it: *Deliverance from enemies* is to no other end, but that we may *serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life*: But alas, he that observes how we employ our quiet, must surely say it serves little to the advancement either of Holiness or Righteousness: For the first of these we have already seen, how little of *holiness* we shew even in that place where nothing else should be admitted; and we are not so preposterously religious, to shew more in others. That *Piety* which is so cold and benumm'd under the warm breath of the *publick Ordinances*; we may well presume stark frozen, in

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our more retir'd offices: and if it thus faint and ſink in conſort, 'tis ſure more liable to the Wiſe mans *Væ ſoli*, and utterly dies when we are alone. 'Tis true indeed, theſe *Cloſet-tranſactions* are immediately viſible to none but the *ſearcher of hearts*, yet in true Devotion there is ſuch a *Symmetry* and proportion, that the Inferences we make by *analogy* may be very irrefragable: nay, 'tis to be fear'd many lye open to a yet clearer *conviction*, and may be proved to have few or none of thoſe private intercourſes with Heaven; for though a negative be not ſimply evincible, yet as in civil caſes we prove a man not to have been at this time in ſuch a place, by his having actually been in another; ſo were the whole Week, Moneth, perhaps Year, of ſome men exactly traced, we ſhould find them ſo engroſſed with other *diverſions*, that there will ſcarce be found any Minute for *devotion* to interpoſe: Mens worldly or fleſhly Concerns ſo divide their *time*, that God from whom 'tis all deriv'd, can be afforded no tribute out of it. Yet alas, 'twere well if this privative ſort of impiety were all we had to anſwer for: but 'tis too apparent we do not only *neglect* God, but *reproach* and violate him: what elſe are thoſe bold and inſolent *blaſphemies* wherewith we daily aſſault him, making him the mark at which all our wild Paſſions are ſhot. Do we want any thing either for our *uſe* or *delight*? Preſently *God* is accuſed, his *providence* or his *goodneſs* queſtioned; and he declaim'd againſt either as impotent or illiberal. Does any body

body vex or diſquiet us? God muſt have his ſhare of our diſpleaſure, his ſacred name muſt be profaned, and we count our fierceſt *Revilings* of men, faint and inſignificant, if not inſpired with the moſt *dreadful* and *horrid Oaths*; Nay, he ſtands obnoxious to all the diſplacencies we receive even from inanimate creatures; if a *Die* or a *Card* run amiſs, our reſentments are preſently vented upon him; he is profaned and vilified, as if he were the *Cheat* that rookt us of our *money*, becauſe he does not ſecure us from thoſe loſſes, to which we wantonly expoſe our ſelves; nor is it only our eager and warmer *paſſions* that thus invade him: Our pleaſanter *moods* do the very ſame, and we blaſpheme by way of divertiſement; every impertinent ſtory or inſipid *Jeſt*, muſt have the haut-gouſt of an Oath to *recommend* it, as every incredible Narration has to *atteſt* it: to ſay nothing of thoſe more ſolemn and deliberate *perjuries*, wherein we impiouſly ſuborn Gods venerable and dreadful *name*, to be the Engin of our fraud and malice: and as if we thought he would forſwear as well as we, bring him to *countenance* thoſe Crimes he has vowed to *puniſh*. Thus do we with a prodigious impiety contaminate even divinity itſelf, make it the ſink for all our puddles to run into; and proſtitute that *name*, which, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks, is *great, wonderful and holy*, to all the unholy *purpoſes*, our Paſſions, our Intereſt, or our Phancies can ſuggeſt to us.

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THIS *profaneneſs* is ſo proper a foundation for *Atheiſm*, that we are not to wonder to ſee ſo many advance from the one to the other; they pay ſo little of the reverence due to God, that at laſt they turn their *impiety* into *argument*, and infer him not to be God, whom they treat ſo unlike one. And truly this ſeems to be the grand piece of *Logick*, which has diſputed many, not only out of *Chriſtian*, but all *native* Religion. How unhappily ſucceſful it has proved among us, is too apparent in thoſe impious diſcourſes which are every where heard, wherein men are arriv'd to ſuch a licenciouſneſs, that *Davids Atheiſt* was a modeſt Puny, who only ſaid in his Heart, *there is no God*, and perhaps upon that account ſhall by ſome be adjudged to deſerve the Epithet the *Pſalmiſt* gives him, and be indeed thought a *fool*, that would not own what would now a-days ſo certainly denominate him a *Wit*, or in the ſolemn ſtyle, a *Maſter of Reaſon*. And indeed they will atteſt the property of the ſtyle, they rather *governing* Reaſon, than being *govern'd* by it; otherwiſe 'twould be hard to diſcern, how from different *premiſſes* the ſame *concluſion* ſhould be induced: and thoſe who in the late adverſe times denied God in revenge of their ſufferings, ſhould now pay their gratitude alſo in the ſame manner, and renounce him as (or more) loudly, ſince his ſignal atteſtation of that *righteous cauſe*; his not owning whereof was then their *principal plea*. The truth is, 'tis a little ſtrange how Atheiſm could admit ſuch enhanſing acceſſions as we find it has;

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for its being the completion and higheſt ſtep of Ill, and that to which all others do but ſubordinately tend, one would think, it ſhould from its firſt appearance in the world, have been ſo mature and full grown a ſin, as could be capable of no improvement; but ſo ſubtilly wicked are theſe later days, that we can never be brought to a *non ultra*, but ſtill find ſomething to add to the compleateſt ſin: therefore though of thoſe that are really Atheiſts, one cannot be ſaid to be more ſo than another, yet ſome may be more daringly, and miſchievouſly ſo; and ſure in that reſpect our *modern* ſurmount all *former*: They were generally on the defenſive part, took up the *tenet* as a *buckler* againſt the unwelcome invaſions and Checks of conſcience, and deſign'd nothing but the more *peaceable enjoyment* of their *luſts*; but *now* men do not only uſe, but love it; make themſelves its avowed *Champions*, ſeek to win it *Proſelytes*; and in ſhort, appear ſo zealous for it, as if they made it their *religion* to have none. And God knows, too many ſuch reverſed kinds of *Evangeliſts* we now have, who with as great deſign unteach Divinity, as the firſt Propugners taught it; and their *number* and *boldneſs* have ſo encreas'd ſince the return of our *peace*, that ſure the next Age will have little cauſe to think *Religion* had any ſhare in the *Reſtoration*. Thus have we done our parts to ſuperſede that obligation of ſerving God in holineſs, by leaving no God to ſerve; and after the moſt ſignal atteſtation of his Deity in our reſcue, *we* do like thoſe *ingrate perſons*,

perſons, who ſeek to ſubvert thoſe by whom themſelves were eſtabliſht, and *deny* him becauſe he has *own'd* us.

THIS is the *holineſs* wherewith we have ſerv'd him, ſince our being deliver'd from the hands of our Enemies, and our *righteouſneſs* has been very proportionable; for if we look into the dealings of all ranks of men, we ſhall find the ſame vein of *deceit* run through all tranſactions. A few years ſince Sequeſtration and plunderings, thoſe *whole-ſale robberies* had ſo over-top't the reſt, that like an *Epidemick diſeaſe* they had overwhelm'd, if not the *kind*, yet at leaſt the *notice* of all other Injuſtices: but ſince thoſe *Leviathans* are withdrawn, the *leſſer Devourers* ſupply their place; Fraud ſucceeds to Violence; and in all places, all occaſions of commerce, we ſtill meet with Sequeſtrators. The adulterated wares, and falſe meaſures in *Shops*; the dilatory proceedings, and evaſive tricks in *Law*; the various and unworthy Cheats of *Creditors*, and the mean and diſhoneſt advantages which are watcht in all ſorts of *Contracts*, are too irrefragable proofs hereof. Nay, not only our Buſineſs, but our very *recreations* expoſe us to theſe deceits, as ſome of our bankrupted Gameſters can too ſadly witneſs; what troops of *Harpyes* attend thoſe ſports is every mans obſervation: 'Tis ſtrange ſo many ſhould yet be to learn the prudence to avoid ſo known a danger, wherein a man is at once made active and paſſive in the ſame Robbery, and does himſelf defraud his *family* of that whereof

whereof he is defrauded by *another*. But amongſt theſe many injuſtices, there is none wherein Men ſeem generally to find ſuch a guſt and ſenſuality, as thoſe wherein God is concern'd; *twenty* Lay-booties humor them not ſo much as *one* from the Clergy; and if the Quakers ſhould be muſtered according to that one Tenet of not paying Tythes, we ſhould indeed find their numbers formidable. How ſubtle even the rudeſt perſons are in defaulking thoſe dues, we ſee by every days experiment, the over-reaching their Miniſter being the grand Triumph of a Ruſticks wit; ſo that not only their covetouſneſs, but their vanity is concern'd in it: I know 'tis the uſual *apology* for this kind of Sacriledge, that either the *maintenance* of the Clergy is too much, or their *merit* too little; for the firſt, I think it may be demonſtrated, That there is no *liberal Science*, and but few *Mechanick trades*, from which a man may not hope as plentiful a *ſubſiſtence*, as this affords to the generality of its *profeſſors*: However I ſhall leave thoſe that make this objection to diſpute it with that authority, which has allotted them this proportion; deſiring them to conſider, that whatever the ſupport of the Clergy is, it coſts them nothing; no man having Purchaſt more, than what remains of the Eſtate, after his Tythe is paid. As to the ſecond, I confeſs 'tis extremely to be wiſht, that the *negligence* and *vice* of Some did not give too much *pretence* to the Allegation; and to ſuch I cannot but apply the words of our *Saviour*, Mat. 18. 7. *Wo be to the man*

man by whom the offence cometh; yet certainly 'tis very incompetent, to juſtifie the detention of their *legal rights*: for till the Law which has aſſign'd them, delegate the Forfeiture to me, the greateſt *enormities* of my Paſtor, cannot entitle *me* to any thing that is *his*: And indeed what blame ſoever is really due to *ſome*, we muſt expect it ſhould extend to *all*, if the Accuſers were to have the benefit of the Mulct; and (as in the late confuſions) all Miniſters ſhould be made *ſcandalous*, in order to the making them *poor*.

'TWERE eaſie to draw up a far larger Catalogue of thoſe *injuſtices* we daily commit; for as a man has divers other concerns beſides his goods, ſo he may be injur'd in all thoſe: and truly the iniquity of theſe days, ſeems fully commenſurate to all the ſuffering capacities of mankind: we *weigh* our own and others Concerns in very *differing balances*, and *offer* thoſe Injuries without any regret, which we can with no patience *ſuffer*: How nicely Jealous is every one of us of his *own* Repute, and yet how maliciouſly Prodigal of *other mens?* So that Defamation is become one of our main *Topicks* of diſcourſe, furniſhes entertainment to all companies; the *preſent* owe their Divertiſement to the *abſent*, and many would be drain'd quite dry, were it not for this reſerve, which like an unexhauſtible ſpring, ſtill ſupplies freſh matter of talk. In like manner how carefully do we avert any hurt or mutilation of our *own bodies*, and yet how barbarouſly inconſiderate are we of *others*, to whom we do the greateſt

greateſt out-rages, rather than uſe any violence to our Paſſion, or reſtrain an angry Humor: only I confeſs there is one Inſtance, wherein though we are *unjuſt*, we are not ſo *partial*; but expoſe our ſelves alſo; and that is in the caſe of *Duels*; a barbarous cuſtom wherein 'tis hard to define, whether the Wickedneſs or Folly be greater; yet it maintains its way in ſpight of all the methods God has us'd to make us better or wiſer: Of this there are too many, and too noted inſtances ſince our reſtoration, as if we were ſo enamour'd of *deſtruction*, that when we are prevented of it from our *Enemies*, we ſeek it from *one another*; or thought *publick Peace* ſo intolerable, that when 'tis caſt upon us (as ſure ours, if ever any may be ſaid to be) we are fain to take in private quarrels, as our reſcue from that dull quiet, and court the utmoſt *miſchiefs*, to avoid the oppreſſion of the greateſt *happineſs*. Thus perverſly do we countermine Gods purpoſes of kindneſs; and when he has ſecur'd us, ſolicitouſly ſeek to be deliver'd from our ſafety; project new *dangers*, and dare his power with a yet harder Task, the *delivering us from our ſelves*: And whileſt we thus avert our quiet, 'tis no wonder that we produce no better effects of it; nor fructifie under that, which we will not permit our ſelves to enjoy.

AND as upon this general view, we appear very ill managers of our Peace, ſo ſhall we much more, if we reflect on thoſe many particular bleſſings which are wrapt up in that, of which we make ſo perverſe uſe, that we therein no leſs

violate *Sobriety*, than we have already appear'd to do *piety* and *righteouſneſs*; ſo filling up the meaſure of our iniquity by tranſgreſſing all the fundamental rules of Chriſtianity, *living* neither *ſoberly, righteouſly, nor Godly in this preſent world*, *Tit.* 2. 12. And of thoſe *advantages* which are the appendages to Peace, there are two moſt eminent; *Plenty* and *Liberty*, both of which are the more remarkable in our preſent quiet, by how much the deprivation of each was the greater. For the firſt, we knovv the *late times of rapine*, had torn from many among us their whole ſubſiſtence, ſo entirely deſpoil'd them that they were reduc'd to *Jobs* condition, and connected the two extreme points of Birth and Death, by a middle ſtate of the like nakedneſs and deſtitution: and to ſuch, our late *reſtoration* was a kind of Civil *reſurrection*; rais'd them like *Eliſha*'s dry bones, from the moſt hopeleſs ſtate, and by a ſucceſſive poſſeſſion of their own *Inheritances*, made them *heirs to themſelves*. And though all were not ſo wholly diveſted, yet like thoſe *Canaanites* whom the *Jews* did not extirpate, they were put under Tribute: and while perſons, who knew ſo vvell how to exact, were *Lords Paramount*, a bare being was all could be expected; they ſeem'd rather Stewards than Owners of their *fortunes*, and had rather the trouble, than advantage of their *Manage*ry: And vvho vvould not think that this ſo long vvant of plenty ſhould have taught us ſobriety in the uſing it? That *deſuetude* ſhould have vvorn out the skill of *luxury*, and vve ſhould not have knovvn

known how to be riotous: but alas, our memories have been too faithful to us in this particular; no one of our vanities is fall'n into oblivion, but on the contrary the art of Voluptuousness so improved, as if all the time that was lost from the *Practick*, had been spent in the *Theory*, and we had for so many years been contriving new kinds and degrees of excess. Indeed it is too sure, we retain'd the *affection*, when we had lost the *power* of rioting; and 'tis not our prosperity seduces us, but we it. For as the *Sun* though it lends its rays to the begetting of the vilest *Insects*, yet makes no such production but upon apt matter, *slime* and *putrefaction*: so neither would the most opulent fortune make us sensual, did it not find us dispos'd and prepar'd for it. How forcible those *propensions* are, appears by the multitude of *objects* on which they work; For they had need be strong Inclinations that take in all Opportunities, nay possibilities of actuating themselves, and such 'tis evident ours are, there being nothing capable of ministring to luxury, which we use not to that purpose. Our *Meat* is no longer apportioned to our Hunger, but our Tasts: so that the *Stomach* is made merely passive in the matter of Eating; serves only to receive those loads we charge it with, whilest its Elections and Choices are forestall'd by the *palate* or *phancy*; nay, 'tis not permitted so much as a negative voice, not allowed to refuse what is either for kind or quantity destructive to it: We do with studied mixtures force our reluctting

appetites, and with all the Spells of *Epicuriſm*, conjure them up that we may have the pleaſure of laying them again. Thus unworthily *treacherous* are we to Nature, which while we pretend to *relieve*, we *oppreſs*, by giving her not only beyond her need, but ſufferance: And to ſhew we are no leſs dextrous in mixing *ſins* than *meats*; our very *Pride* (though in itſelf an intellectual vice) mingles with our *Gluttony*; every thing is inſipid that is not coſtly; and it is thought an ignoble Peaſant-like thing to eat a plain meal: Nor is he now to be lookt on as a Gentleman, whoſe ſingle Ordinary coſts not as much as would be (and himſelf would perhaps ſome years ſince have thought) a fair exhibition for ſome whole families. And that we may not be charg'd with *partial intemperance*, we go not leſs in that of drink; wherein we are ſo nice and critical, that 'tis become a ſpecial skill and faculty to *judge of liquors*: But how great ſoever our *curioſity* be, 'tis ſure our *exceſs* is greater, and does not only over-match but ſupplant it; there being no drink ſo unpleaſant, which the love of a debauch will not reconcile us to. So great a malice do we bear to our *reaſon*, that to oppreſs it, we are content to expoſe our darling, and do violence to our very *ſenſe*. How unhappily predominant this brutiſh Vice is, need not here be told, ſince it too evidently atteſts itſelf to every mans obſervation, it no longer ſeeking the ſhelter of night and darkneſs, but impatient of ſuch delay, appears in the broadeſt light; and he is now a

ſlow-

ſlow-paced drunkard, that has not finiſht his *courſe*, perhaps begun another, before the *Sun* has ended his: nay, ſo is the Scene chang'd, that *ſobriety* is become a reproachful thing; ſuch as even thoſe who value it dare not own, and are either driven to *preſerve* it by ſhifts and artifices, or elſe chuſe to *abandon* it rather than hazard the ſcandal. And certainly this is the great advantage this ſin has for the propagating itſelf; for 'tis impoſſible *Beaſtiality* ſhould be ſo univerſally agreeable to mankind, that all ſhould purſue it out of *appetite* and liking: 'tis this Fear that engages many in it; and though it hath too many *voluntiers*, yet ſure 'tis this *preſs* that helps to make up its *numbers*; which as it ſpeaks the great baſeneſs of thoſe who are thus aſham'd both of Piety and Humanity, and had rather ceaſe to be *men*, than appear to be *Chriſtians*; ſo is it a ſad indication of National impiety, a fatal Symptome that we have neer fill'd up the meaſure of our iniquities, and are ripened for the woes denounced againſt thoſe who *call evil good, and good evil*, *Eſay* 5. 20. which ſure was never more palpably done than in this inſtance, wherein *temperance* is branded for *ill nature*, and dulneſs of humor; whileſt the moſt *ſwiniſh exceſs* muſt paſs for *ſociableneſs*, *friendſhip*, and *hoſpitality*; names which have been ſo long proſtituted, that they have loſt their native uſe, and men have forgot thoſe very diſtant things to which they originally belong'd; yet ſure ſuch once there were: God made us *ſociable creatures*, and we might ſtill continue ſo

upon the ſtrength of that firſt principle, and need not owe our *intercourſe* to our *debaucheries*; no, nor our friendſhips neither, which have been ſo far from being preſerv'd that way, that there is nothing more obviouſly, and frequently violates them; nay, indeed the whole ſpecies of *real* Friendſhips ſeems to be extinct, ſince this *fictitious* ſort took place. Men think it enough (as indeed 'tis too much) to damn themſelves with their friends, and all other communications are tranſmuted into that of Sin; for we daily ſee thoſe, who cleave the moſt inſeparably in this kind to each other, will yet neither do, nor ſuffer any thing elſe: And ſure if this be *friendſhip*, 'tis ſuch a reverſt kind of it, as muſt have as prepoſterous a *Definition*; for none that have yet been given by *Divines* or *Philoſophers* will fit it. The like may be ſaid of *hoſpitality*, which ſure is in its proper nature of a very diſtant make from this; deſign'd to *relieve* Strangers, not *burthen* them; to cure their wants indeed, but not by the worſe exchange of a Surfeit: So that the *ancient* and the *modern* Hoſpitality differ as much as that of *Melchizedeck*, from that of *Circe*; the one refreſhes, the other tranſforms: And how great a ſhew ſoever of liberality this later may have, yet he is not to be thought to have drunk *gratis*, that has paid his *reaſon* for his *ſhot*.

AND to both theſe parts of Intemperance, our Uncleanneſs bears full proportion; the one *makes proviſion for the fleſh*, and the other *fulfils the luſts thereof*. To how brutiſh an impudence this

this ſin is grown is too viſible: we need not trace men into their privacies and receſſes, themſelves willingly proclaim their guilts; nay, dread nothing ſo much as the opinion of being innocent: yea ſo out-dated a *vertue* is Modeſty now become, that even that Sex, to which it was once accounted the greateſt ornament, have put it off, look on it as a piece of *Ruſticity*, and *country-breeding*: whether this pulling down the *fence* be an Indication they are willing to lie *common*, I ſhall not determine: but ſure that very free, and confident behaviour now in uſe, is too apt to invite aſſaults, and takes off all that Extenuation of crime, which was wont to be allowed that Sex, upon the ſuppoſition of their being ſeduced? Thus do we publiſh our ſin as *Sodom*, and if we conſider how much boldneſs it has gain'd ſince the return of our *proſperity*; 'twill be probable that ours alſo has been fomented by *fulneſs of bread, and abundance of Idleneſs, Ez.* 1. 6. That our Plenty is very ſubſervient to it, appears by the *vaſt expence* wherewith many men manage this vice: And that our Idleneſs is ſo too, is no leſs evident by the *large portions of time* that are ſpent in thoſe purſuits, it being, as the great deſign, ſo the eſpecial buſineſs of too many mens lives. As for the *remedy* which God has aſſign'd, it ſerves now only to exaſperate the *diſeaſe*. Marriage with too many only advances ſimple-fornication to adultery, and ſuperadds perjury to uncleanneſs; thoſe ſacred bands are like *Sampſons* withs, broken upon every aſſault of

the *Philiſtines*, and the very thought of being confin'd makes men more apt to range: For alas, 'tis not their *needs* but their *Phancies* they are to provide for, and that is ſo endleſs, that the greateſt liberty of *Polygamy* would never ſatisfie it: the ſame quarrel would lie then to multiplied wives, which does now to ſingle; I mean, that they were their own: And how numerous ſoever their *flock* were, 'twould not ſecure their poor neighbours only *Lamb*; eſpecially when 'tis conſider'd, that in this they gratifie two ſins at once, their *vanity* as well as their *luſt*; their complacence in *undermining* the Husband, being generally as great, as that in *enjoying* the Wife. And if *Pride* abſtractedly and in its own nature be, as *Solomon* ſays, *an abomination to the Lord*, certainly when 'tis thus complicated, it muſt be infinitely more ſo, and aſcertain a concurrence of thoſe *Judgments*, which are ſingly threatned to each of thoſe *Sins*; what thoſe are, I wiſh guilty perſons would ſeriouſly ponder, and then they would ſurely think their momentary pleaſures much over-bought. But alas, ſuch a faſcinating ſin this is, as allows men no liberty of conſideration, they go on as the *wiſe-man* ſays, *Prov.* 7. 22. with the ſame ſtupidity that an *Ox goeth to the ſlaughter*: or, *a fool to the correction of the ſtocks*; and while every body elſe obſerves the Effects of their Vice in their waſted *bodies*, and ruin'd *eſtates*; themſelves are the laſt that diſcern it, purſue the *courſe* till the very laſt remains of ſtrength and wealth are exhauſted, and nothing left them but *diſeaſe* and *beggery*.

Of

Of the truth of this, there have been too many ſad examples, though it ſeems not yet enough, to give caution to others.

AND to theſe *luſts of the fleſh*, we ſpare not to add thoſe of the *eye* alſo; for ſo ſurely we may properly call all thoſe *Luxuries* which adapt themſelves peculiarly to that Faculty; ſuch are the *gaiety* of Apparel, *richneſs* of Furniture, and all the *ſplendor* of Equipage, which has no propriety to any other ſenſe, but that of *ſeeing*, and is loſt if it be not lookt on: And though theſe ſeem to differ much from that *Covetouſneſs* which St. *John* is ſuppoſed to comprehend in that Phraſe, the one being the *tenacity*, the other the *profuſion* of Money; yet they are but ſeveral branches of the ſame Sin, and are diverſified only by a various application to the *Object*: for in ſtrict ſpeaking, he that covets Gold and Silver to lay on his *back*, is as properly *covetous*, as he that deſigns it only to fill his *coffers*. But beſides the propriety theſe *exceſſes* have to that title, they have no leſs claim to that enſuing, *The Pride of Life*; it being evident that they are both Effects and Fomenters of Pride: and ſure this ſets but an ill Character upon them, that when the *Apoſtle* has divided all the *luſts* of the world into *three ſorts*, theſe bid ſo fair to *two* of them. I would not here be underſtood to condemn that Decency and moderate Expence, which agree to the ſeveral ranks and qualities of Perſons, there being not only a *lawfulneſs*, but ſome kind of *civil neceſſity* for ſuch Diſtinctions: nor is the levelling principle fitter to be admitted

in

in Habit, than in Title or Eſtate: That which I accuſe is quite another thing, it being that inordinate profuſion, which does not only exceed the ability and fortune of the Perſon, but the proportion of his rank and condition; and ſo confounds that diſtinction it ſhould preſerve, and levels us the wrong way: it being more tolerable that all ſhould be *Peaſants*, than all *Lords*. And this is the irregularity that many ſeem to affect, there being not only an emulation of pomp and bravery among equals, but thoſe of the moſt diſtant qualities, there ſeeming now no other *meaſure* than the utmoſt extent of their *money* or *credit*; the later whereof is often ſo ſtretcht, that it not only cracks itſelf, but by an unhappy contagion, breaks thoſe it deals with, and like a *Granado* tears Towns in pieces: The many ruin'd Families of *Tradeſmen* do too ſadly atteſt this; would God our *Gallants* would conſider how unequal it is, that many ſhould want *neceſſary cloathing*, only to maintain the *ſuperfluity* of theirs; an Injuſtice which not only upon a *religious*, but *politick* account deſerves the ſevereſt Reproof, and ſince *Divine* Laws will not reſtrain it, 'ewere well if *Humane* were provided: though I confeſs, 'twere not eaſie to find out penalties to deter thoſe, whom the wants ſo uſually attending theſe exceſſes will not diſcourage. This ſort of *vanity* was once thought peculiar to *women*; and though I cannot ſay that the ſexes have exchang'd faults, (becauſe each ſtill keeps its own, together with thoſe of the other) yet 'tis evident they have communicated

municated them; and as the *women* of this Age have tranſcrib'd *maſculine* Vices, ſo the *men* have *feminine*; this particularly, wherein they ſeem fully to anſwer the Copy, they being as Critically knowing in all the myſteries of vanity, and as diligent in reducing their *ſpeculations* to *practice*, as any the moſt extravagant female. Indeed both the one and the other purſue this *folly* with ſo great an expence of Care, Time, and Money, as if to be fine and happy were the ſame thing, and their *bodies* had been deſign'd for their Cloaths, rather than their *cloaths* for their Bodies.

AND now when all theſe luxuries are to be ſerv'd, it had need be an exorbitant plenty that ſhall ſupply them; and that will unfold the riddle ſo frequent among us, of ſo many being poorer ſince they recovered their eſtates, than when they wanted them: Our *revenue* how large ſoever, is ſo clogg'd and encumber'd with our *vices*, that they moulder away, and only ſerve to carry other mens with them, by giving credit to run in debt. There are indeed no ſuch unmerciful *exactors* as our own Luſts; the one gleans after the other, till they induce ſuch a ſcarcity, as the Prophet *Joel* deſcribes, 1. 4. *That which the Palmer-worm hath left, hath the Locuſt eaten, and that which the Locuſt hath left, hath the Canker-worm eaten, and that which the Canker-worm hath left, hath the Caterpillar eaten*: So that in effect, we have only changed our oppreſſors, and are as much or more exhauſted by our own ſins, as we were before by other mens; with this woful circumſtance, that now we

we have the *guilts* as well as the *ſufferings*: Thus do we rob our ſelves, and create *want* in the midſt of all that *abundance* God has given us, uſing our plenty as the *Benjamites* did the *Levites* Concubine, *Judg.* 19. force and proſtitute it, till we deſtroy it; and the ſimilitude holds in this alſo, that what we thus violate is not our own; for let us phancy what we will, certainly our *ſuperfluities* are more the *poors* Right than *ours*, aſſign'd to them by God the grand Proprietor. So that our Exceſſes have, beſides their proper *guilt*, that of *injuſtice* ſuperadded; and when the cry of the *poor* ſhall be joyn'd to thoſe of our riots, they will certainly be too clamorous to let vengeance any longer ſleep.

THIS is the account we can give of our *plenty*, and that of our *liberty* is not much better; 'tis not long ſince that *arbitrary tyranny* expir'd, which gave us no other *meaſures* of our duties or puniſhments, than the *will* or *avarice* of the Impoſers: And then how did we gaſp to be under the conduct and Protection of *known determinate Laws*? Yet now we have them, who conſiders them, or is regulated by them? Between the *licenciouſneſs* of Inferiors, and the *remiſneſs* of Superiors, they are rendred things only of *form*, not *uſe*; for while the one violates, and the other connives, what can they ſignifie? And though there be never ſo many *new* Laws made to aſſert the *old*, yet we ſee they ſerve for little but to partake of the ſame contempt with the others, and are but like the *Chimeras* of an *Utopian State* ſagely

ly contriv'd, but to no purpoſe. 'Tis the Execution of Laws that gives them a real and effective being, and without that, amidſt our great volumes we are yet deſtitute, and may too probably experiment the truth of that *Axiome*, that *'tis better to live where nothing is lawful, than where all things are.* Indeed if we remember how the Statutes of *Omri* were kept, with what a tameneſs the ſevereſt Impoſitions of the *late Uſurpers* were ſubmitted to, we have reaſon to think, *coercion* is the ſureſt Principle of *vulgar obedience*; though withal it ſets but an ill mark upon us, who know ſo much better how to be *ſlaves*, than *ſubjects*. And as we are reſtor'd to our *civil* Liberty, ſo as a branch or conſequent of that, we are to our *perſonal* alſo: We were lately in the condition Chriſt foretold to St. *Peter*, carried by others whither we would not, *Jo.* 21. 18. but now we gird our ſelves and go whither we will; and alas, what uſe do many of us make of this *freedom?* Is it not viſible, that neither our publick or private affairs are the better attended? But on the contrary we are in a reſtleſs purſuit of impertinent or vicious *paſtimes*, go pilgrimages to our *pleaſures*, wander about from this ſport, that meeting to another, till many of us forget we have any other concerns in the world, and are as much ſtrangers to our own homes, as when we were forcibly detain'd thence: And for ſuch I know not whether the former reſtraint be not eligible, to be a *priſoner* being a kind of reſcue to him, that would otherwiſe be a *vagrant*.

THESE

THESE are the *uſes* we make of thoſe *advantages* whereof God has repoſſeſt us. I know 'tis too envious a task to diſtribute theſe accuſations to every Rank and Order of men among us; I have here given them in the lump, and wiſh that not only ſuch *degrees*, but each *perſon* would adapt to himſelf his *peculiar ſhare*, wherein contrary to other *dividends*, I fear the only Immodeſty and Injuſtice too will generally be, for every one not to carve liberally for himſelf. However, 'tis ſure in the groſs they make up the *Character* of a moſt barbarouſly *ungrateful Nation*. God was pleaſed to return our *peace*, before we had forſaken our *ſins*, as if he meant to try our ingenuity; that we who had been ſo much worſe than beaſts under the former method, that no ſtripes would diſcipline us, might have this advantage to redeem our credit, and be drawn with theſe cords of a man: but we have put off not only *piety* but *humanity*, and are equally untractable to all methods. And now who can refrain from *Moſes*'s *paſſionate Apoſtrophe*. *Do ye thus requite the Lord O fooliſh people and unwiſe!* *Deut.* 32. 6. Unwiſe indeed, that from the moſt benigne *purpoſes* of God, extract nothing but our own *miſchief*: are the poorer for his Liberalities, and the worſe for his Goodneſs; by a prepoſterous uſe ſo wear out our Bleſſings, that they ceaſe to be, at leaſt to be *Bleſſings*: And if they once fall from that, there is no middle form for them to aſſume; they convert into the direct contrary, and become the fatalleſt *Curſes*, more heavy than thoſe which were

were originally design'd as such; that degeneration adding malignity, and no *Fury* being so extreme, as that which bottoms upon repell'd and *irritated Love*. Gods *mercies* are like those *pictures*, which according to the different position of the beholder, carry different Representations; if we will still stand on the wrong side, and not take them in their more *amiable* appearance, we shall find they can put on a *dreadful*: his Goodness will not be finally unoperative; if we will not permit it to lead us to *repentance* 'twill drive us to *destruction*. I am sure we have all reason to expect he should exert his power as eminently against us, as he has done for us; unless perhaps he sees that is not necessary to our ruine; for indeed let him but stand by and not interpose his omnipotence for us, he may trust us to be his *Executioners*, our Vices having a *natural* as well as *moral* Efficacy to destroy us. And who knows whether that be not the reason of his seeming connivance, that he forbears to strike us, to give us up to those more fatal wounds we inflict on our selves; this alas, we have too much cause to fear, for 'tis sure, 'tis not our *innocence* that gives us Impunity, but 'tis more than probable 'tis our *incorrigibleness*; that God gives us over with a *why should ye be smitten any more?* Will not prostitute his Judgments; but as the basest of *Malefactors* leave us to the basest of *Executioners*, and let our iniquities become our ruine. This as it is the severest purpose God can entertain towards us, so 'tis our most important concern to avert. And

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O that we, who have ſo perverſly reſiſted all the deſigns of his *love*, would now try to defeat that of his *anger*, rob him of thoſe inteſtine avengers within our own breaſts, thoſe *fleſhly luſts which fight againſt the Soul*, 1 *Pet.* 2. 10. which do not only provoke, but execute his Wrath, and make us more miſerable than *Hell* itſelf could do without them; and God knows 'tis more than time for us to ſeek an eſcape from ſo *formidable miſchiefs*: O let us not contract on minutes delay, let us caſt our ſelves at the feet of our offended God, and as thoſe who are condemn'd to diſgraceful Executions, uſe to petition for ſome death of leſs Infamy, as a *boon* and *favour*; ſo let us beg, that he will pleaſe to think us worth his *own correction*; that whatſoever we ſuffer from his hand, yet that we may not (like to *Herod*) be deliver'd up to the loathſome fortune of being devour'd by our own putrefaction. In a word, let us form *Davids choice* into an importunate *prayer*, and earneſtly beg that we may *fall into the hands of God, and not into the hands of men*, at leaſt not of *our ſelves*, who are more to be dreaded than all our other *Enemies*.

INDEED till we do thus, our proſperities are far from real, and do in this juſtifie our moſt mutinous repinings, that we are never the better for them, nay, much the worſe; yet ſince 'tis only we that have enervated them, they will ſtand upon our account in their proper weight and value: When our *receipts* are ſummed up, God will charge us with them, not as thoſe empty *uſeleſs things*

things we have made them, but as thoſe great and *ſolid bleſſings* he intended them. And certainly this is moſt deplorable ill managery, to reſerve nothing to our ſelves but the *burthen* and *account* of our good things; to enjoy nothing, and yet be anſwerable for all. In ſecular things men uſually pay with ſome regret for thoſe things, of which they have only anticipated the *uſe*: But with what diſmal reluctancies ſhall we come to pay for theſe, of which we have made no *advantage*? And muſt therefore pay the dearer becauſe we have not; it being not ſo much the things, as our employing of them to our benefit, whereof God will exact account. His *anger* is then only incens'd, when we reſiſt his *love*; and his only quarrel to us is, for fruſtrating his deſign of making us happy. And ſure thoſe well deſerve his wrath, that will provoke it on ſuch terms; yet ſo perverſe is the *choice*, as of all ſinners in general, ſo eſpecially of *this Nation* at this time, who have all before us which might make us happy in both worlds, if we did not Madly affect to be ſo in neither. God grant we may recover the Sobriety to make *wiſer elections*, before it be out of our power to make any, and we be found to ſtand to the miſchiefs of our own wild Option.

THE Reader will perhaps think I have gone beyond the limits of a moderate digreſſion; but the too great *copiouſneſs* of the Theme, muſt be my *excuſe*: ſuch over-grown Vices cannot well be drawn in little; and where there is ſuch a multitude, the moſt ſuperficial view of Each, is rather

proportional to a *diſtinct Tract*, than to the *few Pages* it has borrowed in this.. My greater fear is, that the event may prove it impertinent, there being not much hope that a *private whiſper* ſhall be heard by thoſe, who are deaf to the *loudeſt calls* of Heaven, and have made no other *uſe* of thoſe various and ſignal Providences we have been under, than to defeat the *deſign* of them.

CHAP. IX.

A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Diſputes in general.

THESE are ſome of thoſe many artifices, whereby Satan like a cunning *Picklock*, ſlyly robs us of our grand *treaſure*, the power and efficacy of our Chriſtianity, and leaves us only the empty *Caſket*, the name and formal Profeſſion; that which ſerves only to make us *proud*, not *rich*; *confident*, not *ſafe*: And God knows, ſo many are daily thus befool'd by him, ſo many fall as preys to theſe his *Stratagems*, as might, one would think, glut the eagereſt malice, and ſuperſede all farther deſigns: but ſo inſatiate is this grand Devourer, that *retail-prizes*, though never ſo frequent, do rather enrage than ſatisfie his *appetite*: He is Enemy not only to this or that man, but to *mankind* in groſs, and therefore as if he fear'd that even his malice might not prove indefatigable

defatigable enough for so many distinct pursuits, he contrives more compendious methods of destruction: Frames such *Engines* as take off whole ranks, nay troops; compounds such active *Poyson*, as like a Pestilence, kills multitudes at once. It is too trivial a Mischief to annoy the *outward parts*, it is his Mastery to spread an unseen venome in the *Bowels*, thence to diffuse itself throughout, mix with the vital spirit, and convert that *kindly heat* which should animate, into those wild *irregular flames* which ravine and consume. And this is done by that Pestilential spirit of *division*, that heat of *disputation*, which has for so many ages possest and wasted the *Catholick Church*; and by an unhappy kind of Magick transform'd the zeal of Christian *practice* into an itch of unchristian *Dispute*; made the *questions* about our *Creed* more numerous than the *letters* of it; and by multitudes and contrariety of *Paraphrases* so confounded and obscur'd the *Text*, that what was anciently the badge and *tessera* of Christian Communion, serves us for no other purpose, but as an occasion of breaking it.

SO long as the Church retain'd the *simplicity* of Christian doctrine, lookt on her *faith* as the Foundation of her *obedience*, and endeavour'd to propagate to her Children such an understanding of the one, as was most apt to promote the other; She happily made good the title *Christ* gives her, *Can.* 6. of his *Love*, his *Dove*, his *Undefil'd* one: but when the *Serpent* had once got into this Paradise, infus'd his *subtilties*, and nice intricacies

into mens Brains; and leſt that ſhould not be ruinous enough, his *venome* alſo into their Hearts: Then began all thoſe unhappy *Metamorphoſes*, in compariſon of which, thoſe of the Poets are as *trivial* as they are *Fabulous*: then that *faith* which was once inſeparably joyn'd with the *patience* of the Saints, forſook that tame company, and linkt itſelf with the moſt contrary qualities of *wrath* and *bitterneſs*; and thoſe whoſe Profeſſion it was to *reſiſt* unto bloud, ſtriving againſt ſin, *purſued* to bloud thoſe that reſiſted them in any of their ſpeculations: Then that paſſive Valour which had rendred them ſo venerable to their Heathen Enemies, converted ſome, tired out others, and amaz'd all; ſadly degenerated into that active malice, which from *perſecuted Chriſtians*, entituled them to that monſtrous ſtyle of *Chriſtian perſecutors*. And that *ardent love*, which had offered up ſo many Holocauſts to God, was ſupplanted by that *fiery hatred*, that made no leſs acceptable oblations to Satan.

THIS miſerable and deſtructive *change* was ſo much the intereſt of the Enemy of Souls, that we cannot wonder he ſhould ſo ſtudiouſly promote it; and indeed never did he at once ſo approve his *malice* and *ſubtilty*: I would I could not ſay ſucceſs alſo, as in this *deſign*; in compariſon whereof, all his other Projects ſpeak him but a Puny; this is his one *Goliah-Stratagem*, which has ſerv'd him not only to *defie*, but even *defeat the Armies of the living God*.

NOR is his Sagacity more obſervable in the *choice*,

choice, and main drift of the Design, than in the *ways* of Effecting it; had he brought into the *Primitive* Church those large scrolls of disputable points, wherewith he has fill'd the Modern; that more charitable Age must needs have startled and discern'd, that that *seeming Jealousie* for Truth, was indeed nothing but a *real design* against Peace; and would surely never have parted with that sacred *depositum*, that precious legacy so lately bequeath'd by Christ, for those vain janglings, those School-subtilties which now entertain the world. But as he that would divert a man from the *guard* of some important Treasure, alarms him in some other of his greatest *interests*; so he at first raises up *Heresies* of the greatest magnitude, whose blasphemous consequencies so shook the whole Fabrick of Religion, that what was *Uzzahs* Rashness, seemed then every mans advised Duty, to *put his hand to the upholding of the tottering Ark.* How could those who had been baptiz'd into the faith of the Blessed Trinity, suffer the *Arians* to rob them of the Second Person, the *Macedonians* of the Third, the *Valentinians* and *Manichees* so to despise the First, as to set up against him a Rival principle of being? How could those who had so solemnly renounc'd the World, the Flesh and the Devil, see them all bowed to by the temporizing, unclean, idolatrous *Gnosticks*? These were such invasions as seemed to commissionate all that could weild the sword of the Spirit to take it up, and engage in this Warfare. But all this while 'twas a sad *Di-*

lemma to which the Church was driven; if ſhe gave countenance to theſe *ſeducers*, ſhe betrayed her *faith*; if ſhe entred the *conteſt*, ſhe violated her *unity*; the one would undermine her *foundation*, the other would make a breach in her *walls*.

AND the Devil was too old an Artiſt to loſe the *advantage*; he knew well, that even a juſt and neceſſary *defence* does by giving men acquaintance with War, take off ſomewhat from the abhorrence of it, and inſenſibly diſpoſe them to farther *Hoſtilities*; and therefore he fail'd not to provide *ſparks* for that matter, which was now grown ſo combuſtible; nor did he always ſend them from the *bottomleſs pit*, but ſometimes borrowed fire from the *Altar* to conſume the Votaries, and by the mutual colliſion of well-meant *zeal* ſet even Orthodox Chriſtians in a *flame*. A memorable inſtance of this was the *diſpute about Eaſter*; wherein while the veneration they had of the glorious Reſurrection of *Chriſt*, prompted them to commemorate it in the exacteſt manner they could, the *Serpent* creeps into this Paradiſe, and though they had the ſame common end, yet on occaſion of ſome little diſſenting in the way, the heat of *devotion* inſenſibly degenerated into that of *contention*; and by being very tenacious of a circumſtance of that *celebration*, they loſt the more eſſential requiſite, that of *Charity*; kept the Feaſt indeed, but with the leven of malice, and abſurdly commemorate the redintegration of his *Natural* Body, by mutilating and dividing his *Myſtical*. So likewiſe in the buſineſs of Rebaptizati-

on

on, while one ſide in a pious abhorrence of *Hereſie*, thought the ſtain like that of Original Sin, could not be done away by any Purgation leſs ſolemn than that of Baptiſm, and the other in a juſt reverence of ancient *cuſtom*, and jealouſie of *innovation* oppoſed it; the Diſpute laſted till the Scene was changed, and thoſe who deliberated of the manner of *receiving* Hereticks into the Church, were themſelves as ſuch *turn'd* out of it. No leſs well meant were the *Originals* of the *Novatian* and *Donatiſt* Hereſies, and as equally unhappy were their *iſſues*: For in them all, when bitter *Zeal* was once fermented, throughits aptitude to receive, and the Devils vigilance to adminiſter occaſions, the *Orthodoxy* or Hereſie of lives ſoon became terms out-dated, and men were meaſur'd only by *opinions*: That *ſword of the ſpirit* which was at firſt deſign'd againſt vicious practices, had its edge turn'd againſt *ſpeculative* notions; in ſo much, that at laſt like that of *Joab*, 2 *Sam.* 20. 8. it had got ſuch an aptneſs to fall out, that it was always a ready inſtrument of Execution, till even a Philoſophical point, as that of the *Antipodes*, was reſolv'd with an *Anathema*; and not to know the Syſteme of this *preſent* World, made forfeiture of that *to come*.

BUT alas, theſe, though great defections from Primitive unity, were but modeſt eſſays, and feeble aſſaults, compar'd with thoſe which infeſted the ſucceeding ages: This *root of bitterneſs* was then but a *probationer* in the ſoyle, and though it ſent forth ſome off-ſets to preſerve its

kind; yet *Satan* was fain to be at ſome pains to cheriſh and nurſe them up, placed them under the ſhadow of the *Sanctuary*, and got them like the treacherous Ivy, ſupported by that *piety* they were deſigned to deſtroy; but it was not long ere they had got firmer rooting and ſtrength, not only to propagate, but multiply. Every Diſpute in Religion grew *prolifical*, and in ventilating one queſtion, many new ones were ſtarted: And as *queſtions* grew numerous, ſo did *Sects* too; every Opinion almoſt conſtituted a new party, and thoſe again ſubdivided into many others; ſo that of all the firſt Violators of Primitive unity, we ſcarce find any, who did not revenge their *Schiſm* upon themſelves, by ſeparating from one another, as they had all done from the *Church*; till at laſt the progeny both of Sects and Opinions grew ſo numerous, that he who would exact an account, muſt be ſent like *Abraham*, to the Sky or to the Shore; the Stars or Sands being as apt a ſubject of *Arithmetick* as they. Whence it is brought to paſs, that *Satan* now may leave his toilſom labour of compaſſing the Earth; men do his buſineſs for him, giving him leiſure to be only a Cheerful *Spectator* of their *Divinity-prizes*; the bloudy combates of *Eccleſiaſtick Gladiators*.

AND that he may be ſecur'd never to want that pleaſing divertiſement, the *later Ages* have been careful to train him up *Combatants*, it being now become a diſtinct ſort of Learning, a new

Species

Species of Divinity, to raise nice *questions*, create new *difficulties*, branch out with fond *distinctions* our holy Faith, which the pious Simplicity of the first Christians, receiv'd to practise; not to read upon as an *Anatomy*, unbowel and dissect to try experiments, much less to bring into the *Theatre*, there made to fight and bleed, to shew men sport, and try the skill of the unhappy sword-men, and Masters of defence. *The form of sound words*, which in its native frame and constitution was most enlivening and Salubrious, dissolv'd and melted by *Chymical preparation*, ceases to be nutritive; and after all the labours of the *Alembeck*, and hopes of an *Elixir*, insensibly evaporates, and vanishes to Air; or leaves in the recipient a foul *Empyreuma*, or fretting corrosive. An endless dotage about names and words, and then as endless quarrel for them, appearing the commensurate *effect* of the long studies of those *Distillers* in Divinity, who boast its Sublimation.

IT is indeed a thing worthy of the greatest both wonder and lamentation, to see how the plainest, and most *simple proposition*, when it falls into the hands of these *Artists*, is mangled and disjoynted, is rarified, exalted and refin'd: He whose leisure, or indeed whole life, would serve him to survey all the subtile Divisions and Distinctions of the *School-men*, would sure resolve, they had the power of working *Miracles*; *Questions* in their hands multiplying in the breaking, like the *loaves* in our *Saviours*. But sure the event of the Miracles

Miracles are very diſparate, no ſolid nouriſhment being deriv'd by the one, but on the contrary, Stones given us in ſtead of Bread, and thoſe too for the worſt purpoſes, even to fling at one another, as if becauſe *ſtoning* was the death of the firſt Chriſtian *Martyr*, we deſign'd his *Charity* to the ſame fate with himſelf; that *divine Goſpel grace* having ſince faln under as thick a ſhowre, and with this ſharp aggravation too, that whereas he ſuffered from *Jews*, *Chriſtians* are become its *executioners*: whileſt thoſe who pretend to be *Champions* of the Faith, Irrefragable, Angelical, and Seraphical *Doctors*, not only fill the Church with quarrels whileſt they live, but bequeath them in their writings to poſterity; as *Ziſca* is ſaid to have done his skin, to be made an Incentive to war and confuſion.

IT was the policy of *Julian* to ſhut up the Fountains of humane learning from the Chriſtian youth, leſt they ſhould there gain ſuch acuteneſs, as might render them the more formidable Adverſaries to *Paganiſm*: but could he have foreſeen that they would have employed thoſe Weapons not againſt the *common Enemy*, but *one another*, he would ſurely have revers'd the Stratagem, freely opened thoſe *Magazeens* whence they might furniſh themſelves for their mutual ruine, and have as ſolicitouſly *promoted* their Learning, as ever he *obſtructed* it. I am very far from abetting their arrogant folly, who either decry humane learning in general, or make it ſuch a *Moabite*, or *Ammonite*, that however it be admitted in *civil*

vil Converse, must be interdicted the *Sanctuary*. Our Religion prescribes us rational not brutish Sacrifices, and therefore despises not any of those *advantages* which may improve our reason, exalt the *man*, and depress the *beast* in us: yet sure we shall derogate very impiously from Christs prophetick office, if we allow not Divinity to be the Supreme and noblest Science; such as is to be serv'd and attended, not regulated and govern'd by those inferior: but that just order seems now to be inverted; *divine* learning is brought down to *humane*; the *Simplicity* of Christian doctrine so perplext and confounded with *Philosophical nicities*, that *Plato* and *Aristotle* are become the Umpires of our Religion, and we must go ask *Heathens* how far we shall be *Christians*. Those *deep things of God*, as the *Apostle* calls them, 1 *Cor.* 2. 10. and of which he pronounces the natural man an incompetent Judge, are yet brought before *that Tribunal*, subjected to be scanned by rules of Art: but alas, our line is too short to sound those Depths. Men rashly undertake to understand *incomprehensible*, to order *infinite*, define *ineffable* things: and then no wonder if their conceptions differ; for where there is no visible truth, wherein to Center, *error* is as wide as mens *Phancies*, and may wander to Eternity: while multitudes run cariers in the dark, it is not strange to have them justle, and overthrow each other.

AND doubtless were the *Controversies* which have so long harrased the Church throughly examin'd

min'd, many of them would be found of this nature. An *humble belief* has been judg'd too ſluggiſh and dull an exerciſe for men of acute parts, and therefore they would not take *faith's word* that ſo it is, unleſs *reaſon* will be her *ſurety*, and ſhew them how; but ſure it had been much for the *peace* of the Church and *ſafety* of Souls, if Myſteries had been permitted to be *Myſteries*; that thoſe ſublimer parts of our *faith* had been entertain'd with more veneration, and leſs of *diſquiſition*, and that while even the learned'ſt do acknowledge them to be *Abyſſes*, they would not confute that confeſſion, by attempting to *fathom* them. But alas, ſo prepoſterous has been the procedure, that thoſe things which were indeed inexplicable, have been rackt and tortur'd to diſcover themſelves, while in the mean, the plainer, and more acceſſible *truths*, as if deſpicable while eaſie, are clouded and obſcur'd; ſo many ſubtile *queries* rais'd about them, that the *Theorick* of Chriſtianity is become harder than the *Practick*; a grace is much more readily acquir'd than defin'd, and that *key of knowledge* which ſhould give us entrance into the cloſets and receſſes of religion, is by ſo much tampering and wrenching made *uſeleſs*; ſerves only to buſie us at the door, and ſo in effect proves rather a *bar to keep* us *out*, than a *key to let* us *in*. Thus perverſe are the *contradictions* of humane deprav'd nature; which like our *firſt parents* take it unkindly, that God has reſerv'd any thing from us, and boldly attempt to break down

down his *encloſures*, to rob him of his *peculiar*; and yet in the mean, as induſtriouſly contrive to rob our ſelves of our own, by cancelling both parts of Gods diſtribution, neither leaving *ſecret things to the Lord our God*, nor *the revealed ones to us and our children*, *Deut.* 29. 29. Certainly the firſt propagators of our Faith, proceeded at another rate; they well knew that not the *brain* but the *heart* was the proper *Soil* for that celeſtial Plant, and therefore did not amuſe their *Proſelytes* with curious queſtions, but ſet them to the active part of their religion. We ſee what brief and plain inſtructions S *Peter* gives his *Catechumeni*, Acts 2. 38. *Repent and be baptiz'd every one of you for the remiſſion of ſins*: and this it ſeems as a full preparation for the gift of the Holy Ghoſt, which he there promiſes upon theſe only conditions. This was that vigorous Seed which at once *ſprung up* ſuddenly, and *rooted deep* too, and produc'd the liberal harveſt of that day: but ſure had thoſe three thouſand ſouls, been Catechiz'd by our modern *Caſuiſts*, we had ſeen a wide difference, not only in the expedition but ſucceſs. In like manner we ſee *Acts* 8. how ſhort a Creed qualified in S. *Philips* judgment for the Eunuchs baptiſm: and we find S. *Paul* whoſe education enabled him for the ſubtileſt definitions, yet delivers his whole doctrine in this *compendium*, Acts 20. 21. *Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; and 'tis obſervable how he introduces this with a profeſſion that *he had kept back*

nothing

nothing that was profitable for them, Verſ. 20. and ſeconds it Verſ. 27. with another, that *he had not ſhunned to declare unto them the whole counſel of God*; from whence 'tis obvious for the ſhalloweſt diſcourſer to infer, that the whole counſel of God as far as it is incumbent for man to know, at leaſt *neceſſitate medii*, is compriz'd in that one breviat of Evangelical truth: and certainly whileſt all the *diviſion* of theſe generals, was the diſtributing them into *practice*, they were found moſt fertile ſeminaries of all Vertue; but when they came to be *dichotomiz'd*, and canton'd out into curious aerial notions, they loſt their *prolifick* nature: that fruitful land became a wilderneſs, a wild and intricate maze, where men ſooner loſe *themſelves*, than find either *truth* or *holineſs*.

WHEN Chriſtianity firſt atteſted itſelf by *miracles*, it produced in the hearts of its converts, a firm aſſent to the truth of the *Doctrine*, and an awful reverence and adoration of *that God*, who had given ſuch power unto men, awaking them to an Enquiry after *duty*, ſo to propitiate that *omnipotence* whoſe Fury it appear'd impoſſible to bear: And this ſure was a much more *genuine effect*, than if they had buſied themſelves in thoſe many *unprofitable curioſities*, nice, yet bold enquiries into the divine attributes which now a-days ſerve only to ſupplant that pious veneration we owe to them.

IN like manner the comprehenſive enunciation of Chriſt, *Mar. 16. 16. He that believeth ſhall*

ſhall be ſaved, and he that believeth not ſhall be damn'd, was received by the firſt Chriſtians, as the condition on which the two ſo diſtant ſtates of Salvation or Damnation depended, and accordingly excited their diligence, to attain the *one*, and avoid the *other*. And this certainly was a much more concerning employment, than to have entertained themſelves with the modern diſpute, whether ſome antecedent decree of God had not irreverſibly determin'd them to the one or other; a *diſquiſition* that has ſerv'd only to keep us *Idly buſie*, ſet our heads a working, but folds up our *hands* like *Solomon's* ſluggard in our boſoms. So alſo when S. *Paul* affirms it the deſign of *Chriſts giving himſelf for us, to purifie to himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works*; the *Primitive* Chriſtians had no other deſign than to comport with that his purpoſe; to be what he died to make them, and to atteſt their *Zeal* to good works, by being actually *rich* in them. They took *Chriſt's* word, that *he that gave the meaneſt dole for his ſake, ſhould not loſe his reward*; thought themſelves ſure enough upon his promiſe, and never diſputed the proportion either of Worth or Congruity between the work and wages; and had the *Modern* done the like, our *works* had not ſo unhappily evaporated into *words*; we had talkt leſs and done more.

'TWERE eaſie to draw the Parellel through all the points which buſied the devotion of the *firſt* Ages, and the curioſity of the *later*: By all which it would be evident, how much Chriſtian

ſtian doctrine has *loſt* in its Efficacy, ſince it *gain'd* in its Bulk; how we have embaſed our *Coin* by multiplying it; and have divided our *ſum* into ſo many, and ſo ſmall Fractions, as our *Arithmetick* can ſcarce *number*, never *unite*. We ſhould think him very ridiculous, that ſhould hope to advance his *crop*, by grinding the *corn* he ſows: yet, methinks, this has been the Method of our Spiritual husbandmen, who have ſcarce ſuffered one grain of our faith to ſcape Entire. 'Tis ſaid that the *Ant*, when ſhe lays in her winter-ſtock, bites the ends of the *Corn*, as being *Naturaliſt* enough to know that will certainly prevent its ſprouting: And ſure that little contemptible creature whom *Solomon* appoints to preach *induſtry* to the *ſluggard*, may in this point read *Philoſophy* too, to our greateſt *Doctors*; convince them that that ſeed which they mangle with ſo many Diſtinctions and Diviſions, will never ſpring up into Chriſtian *practice*: It will rather be like the *Dragons* teeth, *Cadmus* is ſaid to have ſown, whoſe immediate production was a *hoſtile band* combating one another. A *fable* which, God knows, we have found too ſadly *moraliz'd* in our School-contentions, only with this unhappy difference, that ours are more *immortal*; our *Serpentine* breed fight but never die, oppoſe but deſtroy not one another.

AND then 'twill not appear ſtrange to ſee the firſt ſeeds of diſcord ſo prodigiouſly encreas'd, that they now over-ſpread the face of the Earth: for, whereas in all other things there

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is a ſucceſſion, one generation goes and another comes, and ſo though the *ſpecies* continue, the *Individuals* periſh; theſe ſeem to have the accurſt Priviledge of propagating and not expiring, and to have reconcil'd the procreativeneſs of *corporeal*, with the duration of *incorporeal* Subſtances: This is ſuch an advantage toward their *multiplication*, that we may grieve, but cannot wonder to find them *Swarm*; not like *Bees* to bring profit, but like *Locuſts* to devour every green thing in the land; nor is it now in the power of all the *Magicians of Ægypt* to caſt them out: for were it poſſible ever to become *Satans* intereſt to ſuppreſs them, he would certainly find himſelf in the caſe of one of his young Conjurers, to have *rais'd* more ſpirits than he could *lay*. Mens now *irritated Paſſions*, and formed intereſts, the great fomenters of diſputes, would prove too *ſturdy Devils*, even for *Beelzebub* himſelf to Exorciſe.

BUT 'tis too ſure his Kingdom will never ſo divide againſt itſelf; it ſuits not only with his *Nature*, but with his *Ends* to perpetuate our Striſes, and therefore as if our doctrinal debates were not enough to ſecure his purpoſe, he has an auxiliary troop of ritual differences to attach us. The *Leproſie* which infeſts the ſolider parts of our Religion, has paſt from the *body* to the very *Garments*; the moſt exterior *adherencies*, Habits, Geſtures, Days, every thing that has but the remoteſt ſubſerviency to Piety, are become the *objects* of fierce Conteſts, and have ſo

encreas'd the number and heat of our quarrels, that 'tis unneceſſary, perhaps impoſſible, to add more; if he can but keep up theſe, as God knows, he is too like to do, his Kingdom will be competently guarded, they being his greateſt *ſecurity* againſt that *power of Godlineſs*, that vital force of Chriſtianity, he ſo much dreads: that they are ſo, is obvious enough to him that takes but the groſſeſt confus'd view of them. But that we may better diſcern the degrees of his *advantage* and our own *miſchief*, 'twill not be amiſs to conſider them more attentively, make ſome diſtinct obſervations, not of *all*, for that were endleſs, but of *ſome* of their moſt eminent *Effects*, which we ſhall find ſo pernicious and deſtructive, as ſufficiently ſpeak their relation, and ſubſerviency to the great *Abaddon*.

AND in the firſt place, if we conſider them only *privatively*, as they ſupplant and juſtle out our greater concerns, we ſhall find them ſadly miſchievous, indeed to ſuch a degree, that were they not chargeable with any *poſitive* Ill, they were by this their mere *negative* Force, competent Inſtruments of our *ruine*. Did they actually convey no venome, yet while they ſubſtract our nouriſhment, their effects will be ſure to be deadly; *Grace* as well as *Nature* being liable to be ſtarv'd as well as poyſoned. *Chriſtianity* is not a dull unactive, but ſtirring buſie State, and therefore we ſtill find it in the *Goſpel* repreſented under the *Metaphors* which imply the greateſt Induſtry and Activity; 'tis a *trade*, a *watch*,

watch, a *race*, a *combat*, and it aſſigns us tasks enough to juſtifie the propriety of the *Tropes*: And therefore as on the one hand, the ſleepy Profeſſor will at laſt find he has but dreamt of thoſe glorious Rewards he expects; ſo on the other, he that frames himſelf another *Scheme*, that labours, but not in Gods vineyard, that buſies himſelf in things extrinſick to that one great *Sphere of motion*, the Evangelical Precepts, will finally diſcern that he has but rolled *Syſiphus* his ſtone, eſpous'd a *toyle* under which he may indeed be *weary* and heavy *laden*, but will never find *reſt* to his Soul.

AND then what can be more perfectly adapted to his aim, who deſires to propagate his own eternal reſtleſneſs unto us, than thus to commute our tasks, exchange theſe *pleaſant* and *gainful ones*, which God aſſigns us, for thoſe *uneaſie* and *fruitleſs*, we impoſe on our ſelves. 'Tis true, we find too many of thoſe unprofitable works of darkneſs to buſie and employ us: but I think no one, nay I am apt to ſay not all others together, have proved ſo effectual to his purpoſe, as this of raiſing and maintaining *parties in Religion*. 'Tis too uſual a policy of States to ſecure themſelves from the *fear* of a potent Neighbour, by fomenting a civil *diſcord* in his Kingdom: *Satan* has in this inſtance found it a lucky Stratagem, it having proved the moſt powerful revulſive of his danger. I will not examine, whether he borrowed it from, or lent it to our *Machavilians*, but ſure he may from his

own experience recommend it with the atteſtation of a *Probatum eſt.*

INDEED this art of diverſion gives him a full ſecurity againſt all he fears in our Chriſtianity, for 'tis not the title he envies to us, or dreads himſelf; we know he long ſince had courage to contemn the name even of Chriſt, when invoked by thoſe whoſe practices joyn'd with him in defying it; while we are but *Jewiſh Exorciſts*, make no other uſe of Chriſt, but to get us a reputation and a trade, he can deal well enough with us. *Seven ſons of Sceva* are not half ſo terrible to him as *one* St. *Paul*; 'tis him only he fears, that to the *form* has joyn'd *the power of Godlineſs*: That *Exorciſm* he knows he cannot reſiſt, and therefore has very dexterouſly found a way to divert it, by engaging us in thoſe contentions which allow us not to think of the practical part of our profeſſion. By the *confus'd noiſe* of Battel, quite drowning that *voice behind us*, which ſays, *This is the way, walk in it.* Nay, by this ſubtilty he does not only divert, but foreſtall alſo; like the *Philiſtines*, allows no Spear or Sword that may be us'd *againſt him*, but takes up all thoſe Inſtruments by which we ſhould work the *work of God.* We know to all affairs of Importance there are three neceſſary *concurrents*, without which they can never be diſpatcht; *Time*, *induſtry*, and *Faculties*; and the more weighty and difficult the Buſineſs is, the greater Degree of each of theſe is requiſite. Now certainly the *intereſt* of our Souls is not the ſlighteſt *concern* we have: the avoiding eternal

eternal *misery*, the acquiring endless *bliss* is not so trivial, or so easie a matter, as to be the Work of a *moment*, the purchase of some few *yawning wishes*, or *volatile phancies*: He who is to dispense the Rewards, has propos'd us other Conditions, assign'd us Work which takes up no less *time* than that of our *whole lives*; no less *intention* than of our *whole powers*: And then if we suffer any thing else to interpose, and defaulk what is thus entirely requisite; if we cut new *Channels* for that which should run in this one *full current*, 'tis easie to divine what the Event will be: For man being finite both in his nature and operations, the time and attention he bestows on one thing, must necessarily be substracted from another. And therefore if our Disputes about Religion entertain and busie us, they must unavoidably interrupt our attendance on practick Duties; and so whilest we quarrel with *one another*, give our great *Master* too just ground of quarrel with *us all*, by neglecting the great, and indeed only Business entrusted to us.

NOW indeed that our contentions do thus divert us, is too apparent to any that shall consider it in any of the three forementioned particulars; for, first for our *time*, they do not only *insensibly* steal away much of it (a modesty which most other diversions do still retain) but *Magisterially* exact it, and accordingly have large parcels of it solemnly and avowedly devoted to them; the *scanning old questions*, and *raising new ones*, having been the profest Business of many mens lives;

their very Vocation and Trade wherein they have arrived to ſuch *eminence*, as ſhews they made *liberal oblations* of their Time to it: And of this every age has left ſo many Records, as the mere reading them would allow few vacant minutes to the ſucceeding: And had not *time* a little reveng'd his own quarrel, and conſum'd many of thoſe *writings*, by which himſelf was waſted, the *Hyperbole* would not be very extravagant in this caſe, which we find warrantably us'd in another, *John* 21. that even *the world itſelf could not contain the Books which have been written*. As it is, there are more than enough to employ, nay, devour time; for when men once launch into the vaſt *Sea* of Controverſie, they are toſſed there endleſly, and ſeldom recover a *harbour*. Difficulties like *waves* crouding one upon the neck of another; And accordingly we ſee in *Polemick Diſputes*, how every rejoynder ſwells bigger and bigger, till like the Prophets *cloud*, from a *hand breadth* it over-ſpread the *Heavens*; every little Manual becomes the Parent of vaſt Volumes; and unleſs the evil cure itſelf by majoration; unleſs the greatneſs of the task bring in deſpair to ſupplant curioſity, and keep men from reading, the *ſpectators* will have as little reſpite, as the *Combatants*; both Writers and Readers will be ſo ingroſt, that they will have little leiſure for any thing elſe. And I dare in this appeal to any that have engag'd deep either way, whether they have not found it experimentally true: I wiſh they would but ſnatch ſome broken parcel as a *plank* from the common *ſhip-*

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wrack of their time; reſcue a few minutes for a ſober reflection, and audit what real Profit accrues to them from the expence of ſo many precious Hours; how much it advances that grand buſineſs for which their Time *here* was allotted, and according to which their Eternity *hereafter* will be awarded: always remembring, that if it promote it not, it hinders it, by diverting that *time* which ſhould have been ſo employed: And indeed there cannot be a more comprehenſive *miſchief* than this of the *loſs of time*, it being that which virtually contains the fruſtrating of all other Advantages, whereby we ſhould work out our Salvation. The operations even of *Chriſt* himſelf were, he tells us, limited to a certain ſeaſon: *I muſt work the work of my Father whileſt it is day, the night cometh when no man can work*; and if the Night overtake us, it matters not how we are ſtored with inſtruments of Action, ſince they all at once then become uſeleſs. Our Laws anciently ſet a greater *penalty* upon the ſtealing *Beaſts of breed*, than on other Cattel of the *ſame ſpecies*, as calculating the damage by the poſſibilities of which the Owner was robb'd. Time is the *univerſal womb* of things and actions; and therefore when we loſe *that*, we ſuffer an accumulative prejudice, forfeit our *Rights in reverſion*, as well as our *Poſſeſſions*, our *capacities*, as well as *enjoyments*. As in an Abortion the unhappy Mother, beſides the fruſtration of her hopes, and child-birth pains ſuſtain'd, acquires an aptitude to miſcarry for the future, and never to be able to

bring forth a vital birth: And thus, God knows, multitudes of *Embryon*-purpoſes periſh, and the miſery of it is, they are our beſt that do ſo. We generally purſue our *frivolous projects* with an *active vigour*, but keep our great and concerning *affairs* only in deſign till *death* come and ſurprize us, which like the *fatal Metamorphoſes* the Poets talk of, fixes us in the poſture it finds us, and ſo preſents us to *Judgment*. Now I would know of the moſt eager Contender, whether he would not chuſe then to be found with his hands ſtretcht out in *prayer* to God, or *alms* to the poor, rather than dealing *blows* amongſt his fellow ſervants; if he would, certainly 'tis his concern to put himſelf into that form he would then appear in, to huſband his little ſpan of time ſo, as may ſtand him in ſtead when time ſhall be no more.

BUT if men will needs be *improvident*, yet why will they be *ridiculous* too? If they will barter away their time, methinks they ſhould at leaſt have ſome eaſe in exchange: but to be induſtrious ill-husbands, to loſe all their *advantage*, and none of their *toil*, is ſuch a ſolemn piece of folly, as is at once matter of Scorn and Wonder; yet this is the very caſe here; our *wranglings* do not only exhauſt our *time*, but our *ſtrength* too: We purſue them with ſo vehement an intention, as if our Faith propos'd not to us any other victory, but over this ſort of Opponents: We run our ſelves breathleſs in this *race*, where the *prize* is only a few *fading Leaves*, or what is more tranſitory, a little *popular applauſe*; and make not towards

wards the incorruptible Crown, till we are grown too feeble and decrepit for the other purſuit. Men macerate their Bodies, and waſte their Spirits in *Polemick ſtudies*, preſcribe themſelves no time of diſcharge from that *War*, till they are able no longer to weild their *weapons*, and then, when mere Impotence makes them *peaceable*, begin to cry out of *contention*, ſnatch up *Devotion* when Controverſie begins to be too heavy for them, and at their Death *pray for that peace* of the Church, which they have made it the buſineſs of their life to *diſturb*. This as it ſufficiently atteſts what mens thoughts are in their cool bloud, what apprehenſions they have of the way when they draw near their journeys End; ſo does it abundantly evince the unſpeakable prejudice Pietty receives from our Diſputes; Thoſe have the active and *vigorous Abetters*, while That is turn'd off to languiſhing *bed-rid Votaries*. So that the *diviſion* between theſe two, is like that of the *Cattel* between *Jacob* and *Laban*, all the ſtronger to the one, and feebler to the other: Would God the Scene were not in one reſpect chang'd, and that the *Syrian* had not here got the better ſhare. But in the mean time what greater advantage can *Satan* wiſh for, our ſtrength and induſtry is diverted upon theſe foreign expeditions, and *Sion* is left to be guarded by the lame and the blind, ſuch only as are not able to follow the Camp, and then 'tis not ſtrange to ſee what ſucceſsful aſſaults he has made, that that true *practick vertue* which once made ſuch victorious ſalleys on the heathen World,

World, is now baffled in its own Quarters, beaten from its Works, and driven to ſeek ſhelter in obſcure corners, immures itſelf in ſome few private breaſts, and ſo like an exil'd Prince, makes only ſhift to *live*, when it ſhould *reign*. But alas, ſhall we for ever ſuffer our ſelves to be thus befool'd, ſhall this his ſtale ſtratagem after ſo many hundred years uſe, nay, and detection too, loſe nothing of its Efficacy? Muſt we always waſte our ſtrength in forging ſhackles for our ſelves? This is ſuch an infatuation as *Hoſea* ſpeaks of, *Chap.* 9. 7. *The Prophet is a fool, the Spiritual man is mad*: Would God, we would once put our ſelves under the diſcipline of ſerious recollection, it might perhaps cure the Phrenſie: Let him who has with unwearied diligence watcht all advantage againſt his *Antagoniſt*; rack'd and tortured every period of his diſcourſe, to make it confeſs an abſurdity: Let him, I ſay, conſider, how much better that *induſtry* had been employed in diſcovering the *fallacies* of our common Adverſary, that old Sophiſter, who puts the moſt *abuſive Elenchs* on us, whileſt we are moſt buſie in putting them upon one another. Good God! how might true vital Chriſtianity at this day have flouriſht, if we would have beſtowed our pains the right way? At how much a cheaper rate might we have *cheriſht*, than we *deſtroy* her. All parties pretend to be very careful of this *Vine*, are very buſie in ſetting traps for the *little Foxes*, all whom they are pleas'd to call *Hereticks*; and in the mean time take no care of the *wild Boar*, let

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that not only ſpoil her *branches*, but ſtock up her *roots*, ſuffer the moſt ſavage beaſtial vices to deſtroy both Power and Form of Godlineſs together. Thus unhappily do we divert our intentions from our moſt important concerns. And as *Archimedes* is ſaid to have been ſo vehemently intent upon a *Geometrical figure*, that he heard not of the taking of the City, till an Enemy gave him his *information* and *death* together: So do we ſo buſie our ſelves in drawing our ſeveral *Schemes* of Religion (every of which will pretend to no leſs than *Demonſtration*) that in the mean, that which alone is *true Religion*, is expos'd to the fury of the Enemy, ſack'd, ruinated, and like the plough'd-up *Jewiſh Sanctuary*, not one ſtone left upon another. Certainly moſt of the *queſtions* which at this day diſturb Chriſtendom, have *in reſpect of their matter* no Propriety toward the propagating good Life, but, *in reference to their way of manage-ry*, all aptneſs to hinder it; how much were it then for our *eaſe* as well as *profit*, to turn us into the plain road, where none of theſe Thorny difficulties will encumber us? Alas, why ſhould the *Romaniſt* ſo ſweat to maintain his *Purgatory flame*, as if he already felt its heat, and would in this world antedate thoſe pains, when the ſame Induſtry beſtowed here to *purifie himſelf from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit*, would ſubſtract the matter of that *Fire*, and leave little for that *furnace* to refine; which were doubtleſs a much ſecurer way, even according to his *own principles*, than to truſt to the uncertain devotion of *others*, to fetch him

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out when once deeply ingulpht: 'Tis ſurely much better to ſtarve that Fire by ones own *innocence*, than to leave it to be extinguiſht by the Tears and Piety of *ſurviving friends*. Why ſhould the *Socinian* ſo eagerly contend for the poſſibility of keeping the Law, when *one example* would convince more than a *thouſand arguments*. Let him bend his ſtudy to make himſelf an inſtance of his own doctrine; and then though he do finally fail in proving his *Hypotheſis*, yet, if he do his utmoſt, he will not fail of a better *triumph* than that which the Schools can give; and ſo will even from his error extract advantage, his very *ſtraying* will by a happy *Antiperiſtaſis*, lead him into the *way*. Why does the *Predeſtinarian* ſo adventerouſly climb into Heaven, to ranſack the celeſtial *Archives*, read Gods *hidden Decrees*, when with leſs labour he may ſecure an *Authentick tranſcript* within himſelf; let him according to Saint *Peters* advice, *add to his faith vertue, and to vertue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance*, &c. and that chain of vertues will ſtand him in much more ſtead, than if he could as infallibly (as ſome have confidently) demonſtrate every link of *Predeſtination*: 'Tis the aſſiduous *practice* of Duty will make his calling and election ſure; and unleſs he can confute that divine *Axiome*, that *without holineſs none ſhall ſee the Lord*; he cannot but confeſs he may more profitably buſie his thoughts in labouring to become holy, than in diſputing whether he can chuſe to be ſo or not. Or laſtly, why do we *Chriſtians of ſeveral perſua-*

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sions, so fiercely argue against the *salvability* of each other, as if it were not only our Opinion, but our Interest and our Wish, *that all should be damn'd, but those of our particular Sect*; when God knows, not only every Society, but every single person has enough to do, to *work out his own salvation*, which if we will take the *Apostles* word, is to be done *with fear and trembling*, *Phil.* 2. 12. A temper very widely distant from that of censuring and judging. And sure we should not think that *malefactor* more meriting, or more likely to be acquitted, who should leap from the *Bar* to the *Bench*, and there condemn the whole Goal but himself. 'Twas a sober and Christian *reply* of a late learned Gentleman, who being askt by one, whether a *Papist* might be saved, answered, *you may be saved without knowing that*. And would we confine our cares and enquiries to those things which concern that one great Interest, we might take *less pains*, and yet do *more work*; be less *busie-bodies*, but more *fruitful Christians*, and then sure 'tis time we ask our selves the *Wise mans* question, *Eccles.* 5. 16. *What profit hath he that laboureth for the wind?* And at last give over this unthriving diligence, and not so emulate the most stupid of Beasts, as to make our selves burthens, only that we may couch under them.

AND were this only *Issachars* lot, 'twere the less to be regretted, but also *Zabulon* herein invades his portion; 'tis they that handle the *pen of the Writer*, that have engrost *this error*, and will not suffer it to be a *Plebeian* one. None do so

ſo much this way miſ-employ the two vulgar talents of Time and Induſtry, as thoſe who have a third ſuperadded to them, that of Extraordinary Faculties and endowments, which they do as prodigally laviſh as either of the former. The Beginners or Abettors of *contentions* have generally been Perſons of the moſt *acute refin'd wits* and *excellent learning*, which has enabled them for thoſe quirks and ſubtilties, of which groſſer underſtandings would have remain'd more happily ignorant: A ſtrange production that the *greateſt beauties* of Nature and Art, ſhould ingender the *fouleſt deformity* in Religion. Thus alas, have *Satans* altars the pre-emption of *Gods*, the fatteſt Oblation brought to feed the fire of *contention*, whileſt that of *devotion* expires for want of Nouriſhment. It was indeed no wonder, that the blind zeal of *Pagans* had made him ſo wantonly nice, that none but the choiceſt victimes would ſerve his turn; none but an *Andromeda* and an *Iphigenia*, Royal and Virgin-ſacrifices propitiate his infernal Deities: but that among *Chriſtians* he ſhould ſtill have the *ſame Election*, have the richeſt treaſures of thoſe, who ſay they war againſt him, laid at his feet, have his choiceſt weapons out of his Enemies magazeen, is a riddle that can ſcarce be ſolved, but by concluding *Idolatry* has only chang'd its *form*, and that he ſits as ſecurely enſhrin'd in *mens paſſions* and animoſities, as ever he did in an *Idol Temple*; ſo that he ſeems rather to have loſt the *pomp*, than the *power* of Regiment. But admit, that he were not herein

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so immediately Gods rival, that these *speculative debates* had none of those adherencies, which do so directly gratifie him, yet still he is secur'd of gaining somewhat at rebound; for alas, when mens faculties are thus employed, what Weapons are there left for the defence of true *practick vertue*, and God knows, she needs them but too much: Mens *lusts* are grown subtile Disputants, so that the most improved *reason* may find work enough to manage the Contest; And surely would men of parts timely have bent their endeavours this way, vice could not have got so strong a party. Men are ashamed to be *Proselytes* to a weak Arguer, as thinking they must part with their *reputation*, as well as their *sin*: and certainly nothing is a more general *discouragement* from Piety, than the *opinion of its votaries* not being Persons of Parts, and exalted Understandings; a Prejudice as old as the time of our *Saviour*, as may appear from *Joh.*7. Would God our greatest *Rabbies* would sadly consider how much they have contributed to this scandal, while by laying out their parts on *Polemick niceties*, they have neglected the more weighty part of their business, and given too much Attestation to that scandalous Maxim, that *Ignorance is the mother of Devotion*: Certainly this is quite to mistake their *Commission*, which is not that of a *Herauld*, to proclaim War amongst men, but that of an *Embassador* to reconcile them first to holiness, and by it to God: And doubtless *one soul* gain'd to Piety, would more promote their account, than *many thousands*

thouſands ſecured to a Sect or Party. We find how ſad the doom was of that Servant who wrapt up his Talent, but we have no cauſe to think it would have been at all eaſier, if he had melted the Talent into bullets, to maintain the skirmiſh with his fellows: Whether that be not the caſe of ſome who have receiv'd not the *one* Talent but the *five*, I leave it to be diſcuſſed between God and their own Conſciences; but in the *interim* 'tis ſad to ſee how unhappily men engage their endeavours, which ſeems to repreſent the reverſe of *Eſay*'s *Propheſie*, we having beat our ploughſhares into ſwords, and our pruning-hooks into ſpears, all the Inſtruments of fertility and growth in *Grace*, into Engins of *War* and *diſcord*; and then it muſt needs be a moſt deplorable condition to which Chriſtianity is reduced; which ſeems in this to be under the ſame calamity, which her diſtreſt profeſſors ſuffer from the *Turkiſh* tyranny, whileſt her hopefulleſt and moſt pregnant Children, are like *Janizaries* and *Timariots* trained up to fight againſt her. And let none wonder that I call it fighting againſt her, when yet perhaps none of them do formally renounce her; for that Circumſtance only determines the War to be *inteſtine*, not *foreign*; and if our own ſad Experiences had not too much qualified us to judge, I might appeal to the univerſal vote of mankind, which of thoſe were the moſt deſtructive. Indeed were there no other Act of hoſtility diſcernable, but that which we have hitherto inſiſted on, the intercepting

cepting her ſupplies, the cutting off from her that time, induſtry and gifts, whereby ſhe would be nouriſht and ſupported, that were irreparably injurious to her, and conſequently moſt grateful to that grand *Enemy*, who, as hath been ſhew'd, makes advantage of our Wranglings, of Diſſentions *with one another*, to reak his more inveterate Malice *on us all*.

CHAP. X.

A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Diſputes, as they ſupplant Charity.

BUT alas, the miſchief of theſe debates can never be deſcrib'd by bare *negatives*; there are multitudes of *poſitive* ills, that inſeparably adhere to them, and thoſe of ſo deſtructive a force, that if Chriſtianity were *beleagred* and *famiſht* by the former, ſhe is *ſtorm'd* and *batter'd* by theſe, and ſo is aſcertain'd to ſink under all the methods of ruine. In the front of theſe we may well rank thoſe diſplacencies and animoſities which are the product of our ſpeculative differences, and which do indeed ſo naturally reſult from them, that 'tis not to be hoped ſo long as the *one* continues that the *other* will ever ceaſe. For though in *practice* we often ſee a bewitching Sin dethrone the Reaſon, and make men act as if they had no ſuch ſuperior

principle to guide them, yet in matters of *Speculation*, their *affections* are generally ſtrongly influenc'd by their *underſtandings*. We do not only approve, but love thoſe notions wherewith we are prepoſſeſt, which kindneſs as it propagates itſelf to the *abettors* of the ſame Tenets, ſo alſo it inſinuates diſlikes to the *oppoſers*. And as that oppoſition advances, ſo the diſguſt does too, till at laſt the Scene ſhifts, and the *Perſons* are at a greater war than the *Opinions*. But we need not thus derive a proof from the *cauſes*, when the thing does too demonſtrably atteſt itſelf by the *effects*; for what iſſues are there of the mortalleſt hatred, which do not plentifully flow from this fountain. *Humane nature* we know has but three ways of actuating its paſſions; by *thought*, by *word*, and by *deeds*; and we may ſurely conclude the feud very bitter that employs all theſe Engins, as 'tis too viſible this does; for though the *former* of theſe be in its own nature inſcrutable to all but omniſcience; yet the *two later* are, according to *Chriſts* own Rule, of the *Tree by the fruits*, infallible *Criterions* of them; and thoſe make ſuch liberal diſcoveries, that I think I may appeal to any who have eſpous'd a *party*, whether they have not with the firſt diſcriminating rudiments of their own Sect, imbib'd a ſecret *confus'd prejudice* to all others. Nay, I fear there are but few of ſo mortified paſſions, as to have ſtopt there, and not advanc'd to a direct averſion, and alienation of mind. Indeed were it not for this, 'twere ſcarce poſſible

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for ſo many of the *vulgar*, to be ſuch *Bigots* in their ſeveral factions; for alas, their Intellects are generally too *groſs*, to have any *clear* apprehenſion of the Points they contend for; their Leaders only give them ſome *general confus'd notions*, juſt enough to excite their *diſpleaſure* againſt all Diſſenters, and then their *anger* muſt preſently be call'd *zeal*, and inſtead of the more uneaſie task of ſuppreſſing their paſſion, this expedient ſerves at once to hallow and gratifie it: Nay, ſo ridiculous have ſome mens prepoſſeſſions of this kind been, that they would ſcarce allow thoſe to be *entire men* whom they thought not *ſound believers*, but have phancied I know not what *bodily* as well as *Mental* Monſtroſities in thoſe they were pleas'd to call *Hereticks*; a piece of childiſh credulity which the emiſſaries of ſome factions have not diſdain'd to make their advantage of. But theſe inward diſguſts and rancors are but the firſt bound of this ball of contention, when this leven is once in the *heart*, it will quickly diffuſe itſelf, and both *tongue* and *hands* will be tainted with it. Hence comes it, that diſputes in religion are manag'd with ſuch virulency and bitterneſs, that one would think the Diſputants had put off much of *Humanity*, before they come thus to treat of *Divinity*. The government of the Tongue is a piece of morality which ſober nature dictats, which yet in this inſtance many even of our greateſt Scholars ſeem totally to have unlearnt; For whether we conſider the unſeemly reproaches, or ri-

gid cenſures, wherewith almoſt all parties purſue their Antagoniſts, we have reaſon to ſay with S. *James*, *The tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly Poyſon*: Would God their *guilt* of this kind, did not ſo loudly proclaim itſelf, as to ſuperſede the need of *proof*. 'Tis too obvious that the *Satyr* has uſurpt the chair, and *Polemick Diſcourſes* are degenerated into *libels* and *invectives*; our Controvertiſts fall from *arguments* to *reproaches*, as if their Zeal lay more to blaſt their adverſaries *fame*, than confute his *error*; and were this only in perſonal extemporary debates, it might have the excuſe of an indeliberate paſſion. Indeed it were to be wiſht that all words of this ſort might vaniſh in that breath that utters them; that as they reſemble the Wind in *fury* and *impetuouſneſs*, ſo they might do alſo in *tranſientneſs*, and *ſudden expiration*: But alas, a courſe is taken to immortalize them, they become *records*, and our moſt elaborate *controverſial writings*, like the Earth after the curſe, over-run with theſe briers and thorns, Sarcaſms, contumelies and invectives filling ſo many *Pages*, that were thoſe weeded out, many *volumes* would be reduced to a more *moderate bulk* as well as *temper*. Nor are our *cenſures* any thing more modeſt than our *reproaches*, every petty difference is mutually upbraided to each party as a defection from the faith, ſo that we ſcarce know a milder *name* than Hereſie, nor *doom*, than Damnation. And as if the viſible obliquities of errors would not afford us indictments enough againſt

againſt one another, there is a cloſer inſpection made, every *poſition* is ript up, and curiouſly diſſected, to ſee what *Embryo* is in its womb, what ſeeds there are of monſtrous productions, which though perhaps the native ſtrength of the Principle would never have *animated*, yet the preternatural heat of an Antagoniſt can quickly *hatch* them (like the *Chickens* at *grand-Cairo*) into life, and vigorous being: and if by a long chain of (perhaps fallacious) Inferences, ſome ſuch Imputation is faſtned upon a *Theſis*, then all who embrace that, are charg'd alſo with all this *ſpurious brood*, though they never ſo ſolemnly renounce and diſclaim them. A practice ſure very uncharitable; for ſuppoſe ſuch *conſequencies* never ſo regularly deduced from my *opinion*, yet ſo long as I ſeriouſly diſavow and deteſt them, I may indeed be thought *unwiſe* in not diſcerning the connexion, but ſure not *impious*. So that unleſs want of *Logick* be a *damning ſin*, no man can hence be authoriz'd to pronounce me *reprobate*: and I cannot think that God, whoſe rigor bends againſt the faults of our *wills*, rather than our *underſtandings*, and who at the laſt great aſſize will aſſume our own conſciences into the judicature upon us, will ever ſentence me for thoſe *deductions* how horrid ſoever, which I never made mine, or that I ſhall ever find my ſelf in Hell for a *miſperſwaſion* which I never entertain'd. But there are ſome whoſe Cenſures are not ſo *artificial*, yet no leſs *ſevere*, who beg their *Poſtulata*, and taking it for granted that ſuch and

ſuch are the only ſanctified opinions, make them the *Shiboleth* by which to diſcriminate not only their *own* Friends, but *Gods* too, lock up Heaven gates againſt any who bring not that Ticket for admittance; and though they make the way wide enough to receive the moſt *over-grown Sinner* of their own Opinion, yet they pronounce it impoſſible to the *ſtricteſt piety* of a Diſſenter. And upon ſuch grounds as theſe do we mutually doom one another to perdition, never conſidering, that whileſt we ſo briskly preſage *others* Damnation, we really prepare for our *own*. Alas, our eagerneſs to *heat the Furnace ſeven times hotter for all that how not to our dictates*, does but expoſe us to the fate of *Nebuchadnezzars officers*, *Dan.* 3. to be our ſelves conſum'd in that flame, wherein we caſt them. 'Tis indeed to be wiſht we would ceaſe to invade Gods peculiar, by judging thoſe that muſt ſtand or fall to him: but if we will needs take his *office*, 'tis but equitable we take his *rules* too; and in our *Wrath* remember *Mercy*: But God be bleſſed 'tis the Judgment of our *upright*, yet *gracious* Maſter, that ſhall finally determine us; and not that of our paſſionate fellow-ſervants: If theſe were irreverſible, and the Key of the bottomleſs pit were in our *cuſtody*, we might give Satan *a Writ of Eaſe*, diſcharge him from his perambulations, he would need no more to walk about as a *Lion*, but might ſtill lie in his *Den*, and we ſhould bring in *prey* enough to glut the Devourer: For could we *execute* all we *condemn*, we might ask the Diſciples queſtion,

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Mat. 19.25. *Who then can be ſaved?* But as theſe ſevere *cenſures*, are a preſent *violation of Charity*, ſo they tend to the perpetuating it by obſtructing a return to that *unity of Judgment*, which might make up the very *original breach*: for while men reciprocally load each others opinions and perſons with deteſtable imputations, if they really ſpeak what they think, they do ſtill more deeply impreſs upon themſelves the prejudice to that which they accuſe, (*hatred* as well as *love* gathering ſtrength by being actuated:) but if they do indeed not believe their own *charge*, yet having once made it, either upon Intereſt or Paſſion, 'tis not probable they will want *pride* to maintain it; and when we conſider how ruling a *piece of carnality* that is, we cannot wonder if it indiſpoſe men to *retractations*. I wiſh we had not too many, and too late inſtances of ſome whoſe weightieſt *objection* againſt a cauſe, has been their own former *violence* againſt it. When men have once faſtned the brand of Hereſie, Prophaneneſs or Blaſphemy upon an *opinion*, they think they cannot afterwards become its *Proſelytes*, without either ſeeming to *aſſume* thoſe Guilts, or at leaſt that of having *falſly charg'd* them upon others: and the Horns of ſuch a *Dilemma* do ſo gore their *reputation*, that it often tempts to ſalve that with the *wounding of conſcience*, and perſwades them rather to reject their *convictions*, than expoſe their *credits*. And certainly were this the only ill conſequent of our rigorous accuſations, it would be enough to pre-

judice them as unfit Inſtruments in a Goſpel-deſign; but though they ſuit not with that work to which they ſolemnly *pretend*, they are moſt accommodate to that they really *produce*: For if we examine in the third place, what *influence* theſe our eager conteſts have upon our *actions*, we ſhall find them fully proportionable to our *words*. And firſt negatively, 'tis apparent in too many, that they are apt to confine even the common offices of humanity to their own Sect: and others who do not ſo, yet ſhew ſo great partiality in diſpenſing them, as diſcovers the name of *Chriſtian* is not half ſo charming, as that of their own *particular Faction*. Were inſtances of this kind as *needful* as they are *numerous*, 'twere eaſie to give multitudes: but I think none that has liv'd in our late confuſions can have wanted occaſions of obſerving it in *others*, at leaſt, if not in *himſelf*. But alas, *omiſſions* are ſcarce worth our notice, when there are ſo many *poſitive Acts* of unkindneſs ſo viſible among us: They know little of *ancient*, and leſs of *modern* Times, that are unacquainted with the *mutual perſecutions*, which almoſt all parties have alternately rais'd, one againſt another among Chriſtians: *Confiſcations* and *baniſhments*, *Gibbets* and *flames*; Weapons God knows much too carnal for a ſpiritual warfare, yet much more in uſe than thoſe S. *Paul* recommends to *Timothy*, *gentleneſs*, and *meek inſtructing of Oppoſers*, 2 *Tim.* 2. 25,26. And when 'tis conſider'd that thoſe Oppoſers too were Heathens, 'twill be more than a little ſtrange, that

Severity

Severity ſhould be allowable to *Brethren*, which was interdicted againſt *Aliens*. Is it an eaſier crime to reject the *entire body* of that Faith which was once delivered to the Saints, than to differ in the explication of ſome *one branch* of it? Nay, perhaps only of ſome *corollary* and *deduction* from it, which as far as it is humane, may be fallible, and therefore can no more command my *aſſent* than it ſatisfies my *judgment*; yet this is generally the moſt that can be affirmed of our differences; For almoſt what Party is there which do not avowedly own all that *Faith* which conſtituted the firſt *Chriſtians*? Would God, we did as uniformly embrace the Charity too; and then moſt of our diſputes would be ſuperſeded, at leaſt ſo calm'd, that there ſhould be none of thoſe deſtructive effects which they now produce: For alas, how many funeral piles has this prepoſterous zeal kindled? So that what ſome ſaid of *Draco*'s Laws, may too juſtly be applied to our arguments, that they have been writ rather in *blood* than *Ink*. But as Chriſt when he forewarn'd his diſciples of the enſuing perſecution, tells them, not only they ſhall be kill'd, but they ſhall be put out of the Synagogue: So now as if Chriſtians were emulous of every branch of *Jewiſh* cruelty, we tranſcribe that part of the copy too, and either by cauſleſs excommunicating *others*, or ſeparating *our ſelves*, we deny the benefit of *publick communion* to each other: And this is a greater ſeverity than the former, by how much more implacable our hate is againſt what

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we count *error*, than what we know to be vice; and by how much the concerns of the *Soul* are more eſtimable than thoſe of the *Body*. The inveterateneſs of thoſe Feuds which riſe from Opinion, may clearly be diſcovered in this inſtance; let a man have committed all the *outrages* which may render him unworthy to live, yet when we proſecute him to *death*, we willingly afford him all helps towards his *future ſtate*, and no man is ſo inhumane as to refuſe to pray, either *for* or *with* a Malefactor; yet ſome few *ſpeculative differences* are ſuch a gulph betwixt us, that we cannot meet even in that we all acknowledge our common Duty, *the worſhip of our God*. Certainly among all the accurſed iſſues of our *contention*, there is none more malignant and criminal, than this of *Schiſm* and *Separation*, and would men judge diſpaſſionately, more irrational too: For doubtleſs were our caſe ſtated to any ſober Heathen, he would never be able to gueſs, why they who equally acknowledge the advantage and neceſſity of *prayer*, confeſs the ſame God, have the ſame common wants in this world, and hopes in the next, may not ask in the ſame *form*, and in the ſame *place*. Alas, is it not enough to be at diſtance where we *differ*, but muſt we be ſo alſo where we *agree*? Is unity ſo dreadful to us, that we muſt act contradictions to eſcape it? Surely this is a *ſtranger faſcination* of the ſpirit of Diviſion, than that in the Goſpel-*Demoniack*, which enabled him to break all bonds in ſunder, and like it, abhors the approaches of

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a *Saviour*, crying out, *What have we to do with thee, thou Jeſus the Son of God, art thou come to torment us?* Who knows what a powerful Exorciſm the united interceſſions of the Chriſtian world might have been; had we joyntly deprecated our quarrels, God might have found a way to have compos'd them, though we could not; and our *tears* might have cemented thoſe breaches which our *diſſents* made, but our *ſeparation* widens. I know the venerable names of the Sanctions of *Holy Church*, the hundred thirty ſeventh Canon of the Code of the univerſal Church, which ſays in expreſs terms, Ὅτι οὐ δεῖ αἱρετικοῖς ἢ σχισματικοῖς συνεύχεσθαι, *that we ought not to pray with Hereticks or Schiſmaticks*, and very many warm expreſſions of the *Fathers* are producible in this caſe: But till we Excommunicate with the Tears and Sorrows, and publick concernment of the Primitive Chriſtians, who refus'd all acts of kindneſs only out of love, and the moſt ardent Charity, we may by no means lay claim to their pattern, whoſe eſtrangements only flow from malice and inveterate hate. Would we indeed comport with the Example of thoſe *happy Times*, we ſhould have fear'd the *guilt of Schiſm* in our ſelves ſo much, as not to have lightly charg'd it upon others; we ſhould have prayed for the *converſion* of Diſſenters, not laid *Anathemas* upon them, and prayed for their *confuſion*. St. *Paul* we ſee, *Heb.* 10.25. reckons the *forſaking of Aſſemblies*, as a degree, at leaſt preparative of *Apoſtaſie*; and from his time throughout all the purer ages of the Church

Church the holy Fathers have generally branded it as the higheſt impiety; and no marvel, for it is one of thoſe Gyant-like ſins, which not only oppreſſes *men*, but invades even *God himſelf*. 'Tis the mangling and aſſaſſinating *that body* to which Chriſt owns an *inſeparable connection*; the putting him to head ſcatter'd limbs; inſtead of an entire compact body, as if we meant to refute St. *Paul*, ſhew him 'tis poſſible that *Chriſt may be divided*. Good God! what ſhall we ſay when we ſee Heathen Soldiers eſtimate Chriſts *coat* higher than Chriſtians do his *body*! they thought the *one* too good to be parted, but we ceaſe not to tear and mangle the *other*, and which is yet more monſtrous, make it *a part of our Religion* to do ſo. We name our *Opinions* our *Faith*, and when under that Title we have enſhrin'd them, *we* make more barbarous Immolations than ever the moſt *ſavage Heathens* did. They ſacrificed ſome few objects of their Love, their *Children*, but we ſacrifice the very *affection*, and think our Zeal *lukewarm* till it have reduced our Charity to *aſhes*. And now if we compare theſe our *Diviſions*, *Wrath* and *Bitterneſs*, with thoſe fundamental, Goſpel-precepts of *Unity*, *Love* and *Meekneſs*, we muſt ſurely ſay we have not there ſo learn'd Chriſt. And then how ridiculous is it, to pretend a Zeal to that Goſpel, whoſe very foundations we undermine? Peace is at once the *bleſſing* and *duty* of Chriſtians, and thoſe heats of *ſpeculative* Conteſts which violate it, will certainly never ſerve to make us either good or happy. And therefore

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till Charity ceaſe to be an Eſſential part of Chriſtianity (which certainly we muſt burn our Bibles ere we can ſuppoſe) we muſt conclude, that our Diſputes, and the ways whereby we manage them, how much ſoever they pretend to Preſerve, do indeed evacuate and deſtroy true, that is, *Practick* Chriſtianity.

CHAP. XI.

A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Diſputes, as they engage upon ill Arts and Scandalous Practices, to ſuſtain the eſpouſed Cauſe and Party.

AND yet ſo unhappily are many men miſtaken, that theſe *irregular heats* which thus waſte the vital ſpirits of Religion, are thought the moſt *Soveraign Cordials* to ſupport them. The higheſt *Paroxiſm* of this Fever is deem'd the perfecteſt *Health*. Men eſteem the over-flowing of their *Gall*, the exuberance of their *Zeal*, and then all the Promiſes to the *faithful combatant* in Chriſts camp, they confidently appropriate to that their ſo *eminent Grace*; though indeed it can with no more propriety be call'd ſo, than *Pharaohs lean Kine* might be ſaid to be *fat*, becauſe they had devour'd thoſe that were ſo. In plain terms, men lay ſo great weight upon their being of right opinions, and their eagerneſs of abetting them, that they account *that* the

the *unum neceſſarium*, and think the propagating of thoſe ſo *important a ſervice* to God, as will juſtifie the uſe of the moſt *interdicted inſtruments*, legitimate the moſt *enormous Commiſſions*, that they can phancy contributive to that pious End: And moreover commute for the neglect of *Practick duties* in the general tract of their *lives*. I ſhall not here urge the hazard of mens erring in the choice of opinions, nay, the certainty that of many oppoſite, one only can be the right; and then to all ſuch as miſs that, their very groundwork fails them. I ſhall only confine my ſelf to the *malignant influence* this Perſwaſion has on *practice*, and in that reſpect I cannot but affirm it a moſt *pernicious deluſion*, which as it tends extremely to the enhanſing the bitterneſs of our conteſts, ſo it may juſtly be reckoned among the worſt effects of them, and is a moſt *irrefragable proof* how much they obſtruct the vital *efficacy of Religion* in our hearts. Nor is it any new thing for men thus to deceive themſelves; for we find ſuch Confidences as theſe frequently upbraided to the *Jews*, both by the *Prophets* and *Chriſt* himſelf; they thought their *Zeal* to the Temple and ritual obſervances ſo invincibly meritorious, as no *Crime* could defeat, and that their *legal purifications* would render them acceptable in Gods Eyes, in ſpight of all their *Moral pollutions*: But how fallacious a hope this was, the many ſevere increpations of God do ſufficiently atteſt. Yet certainly their guilt was far below ours; the things they ſo depended on were *parts*, though not

not the *whole* of their Duty; those *Ordinances*, though perhaps somewhat *adulterated* by *Rabbinical* mixtures, yet for the main were *instituted* by God himself, and that with a design of discriminating and separating them from the rest of the world; and such peculiarities and privileges as these, might have an aptness to excite that presumption: But alas, the case is otherwise with most of us; they are not the *Revelations* of Gods will, not the *Testament* of our dying Redeemer, but some *Codicils* and *Annexes* of our own we so earnestly abet. 'Tis not the *Text* (for then 'twere impossible for any that receiv'd the same Canon of Scripture to differ) but our *glosses* to which we pay such Reverence; and when on that account we *sever* our selves from those to whom the Commands of God, the Bloud of our Saviour have most closely *united* and *cemented* us; we can yet make a shift to think that there is so much of Sacred in this, as shall not only render it highly rewardable, but also hallow all other profanations of our lives; and in our *Jehu*-march upon such an expedition, can turn all regrets of conscience (like *Joram's* messengers) behind us. That this is so, none can doubt who observe with what boldness men rush upon the most *unchristian sins*, in pursuit of what they phancy a *Christian cause*. Were it not for this *amulet*, how were it possible for any to think they may venture upon Perjury, Sacriledge, Murder, Regicide, any thing without impeachment to their *Saintship*; nay, to think that the only danger lies on the other side,

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in being *remiſly wicked*, that to *ſlack* any thing of the utmoſt ſpeed, is *to do the work of the Lord negligently*. Yet that this has been a prevailing Perſwaſion, we have had too many, and too ſad inſtances; and God grant we may not find them ſo repeated, that our *ſenſe* may ſuperſede the *uſe* of our memories concerning them; nor has this been peculiar to one only Sect; but thoſe who are otherwiſe at the wideſt diſtance unite in this Principle. They are not only *Phanaticks* that can ſay *grace* over the fouleſt *crimes*, and conſecrate them to the uſe of a *good cauſe*; if we examine the *Dypticks* either of Conclave or Conſiſtory, we ſhall find ſome Saints upon that account, who could never have been ſo upon any other. And when we conſider how often *Heaven* has been mortgaged to gain Auxiliaries from *Hell*, how men have been encouraged to the moſt *damning ſins*, by *promiſes* of being certainly ſaved; we muſt either think that a *Holy cauſe* is omnipotent enough to reverſe *Gods decrees*, to *ſave* whom he would *damn*, or elſe that this pretence is one of the moſt ruinous deceits, the moſt fatal Treachery to ſouls that ever *Satan* contriv'd, who though he do in all inſtances play the *Mountebank*, yet ſure never more than when on confidence of this *Antidote* he perſwades us thus to ſwallow down his *deadlieſt Poyſon*.

I MUST not here attempt to enumerate all the *unchriſtian practices*, that have on this ſcore been made, not only *lawful* but *meritorious*; yet there is one of ſo frequent uſe, that I muſt needs advert

advert unto it, and that is, those *calumnies* and *falshoods*, which are now become a piece of *Ecclesiastick* as well as *state policy*, and a great part of that offensive armour wherewith our controvertists assault one another. Indeed if we consider how many *forges* are daily going for these *Engins*, we shall have reason to think, all Parties have an high esteem of their *usefulness*. Of these Calumnies there are too many sorts and degrees to be here particulariz'd: And indeed those, who permit themselves to use any, can be suppos'd to have no other *boundaries* than the advantage of their *cause*: And accordingly as that seems to exact, they lay their *Scene*; sometimes they traduce the persons of their opposers, and by raising prejudices against them, hope some of it will reflect upon their doctrine: did men generally know how to distinguish between *reports* and *certainties*, this *stratagem* would be as *unskilful* as it is *uningenuous*: But considering the vulgar temper, it's not unaptly suited to it. This it seems was anciently understood, it being the old Greek advice, Θαρρῶντας ἅπτεσθαι καὶ δάκνειν ταῖς διαβολαῖς, ὅτι κἂν θεραπεύσῃ τὸ ἕλκος, ὁ δὲ σημεῖον, ἢν ὑλὴ μένει τῆς διαβολῆς. *To calumniate stoutly, for that how perfectly soever the wound of reproach be heal'd, there will remain a scar; and though we wipe away with never so much care the dirt thrown at us, there will be left some sulliage behind*: And accordingly this was the Expedient the *Pagans* us'd against the *Primitive Christians*, to put them thus in the skins of beasts, and shapes of monsters, and then worry them to

death. And this is the method ſtill, though heightned and improved; and our *Religion* has ſuffered infinitely more ſince we us'd it againſt *each other*, than when they manag'd it againſt the *whole Community*. But beſides this *defamation* of Perſons, another branch of this black Art is the *depraving* of Writings, both in the ſenſe and very letter, and direct words; for the former of theſe, whoſoever obſerves the ſtrange perverſions, and affected miſtakes of mens meanings viſible in many of our *Polemick* diſcourſes, will ſure reſolve that a mans *intentions*, as well as his *words* and *actions* may be calumniated: Nor does the *letter* ſcape better, every period which threatens danger to the cauſe muſt be mutilated and diſmembred, and as *Sampſon* was by the *Philiſtines*, loſe its Hair and Eyes, and then be made ſport for the whole party. And I fear there are too few, who do not in this caſe take the *Jewiſh* reparation, an *Eye for an Eye*, &c. retaliate to the adverſary the foul play they receive. But ſome advance yet higher, and think it not enough to make an Argument or Teſtimony uſeleſs to the *Enemy*, unleſs they draw it over to *themſelves*, make it *betray* the ſide it was to *maintain*, and as a Conqueror uſes to reſtore Arms to ſuch of the adverſe party, as will turn to his, ſo after they have by ſatisfactions ſecured themſelves of its aid, it ſhall then be made as potent as is poſſible, and with ſuch kind of *Renegado troops* as theſe, ſome *cauſes* have been much ſupported. Yet were this *violation* offer'd only to the writings of living men, who might vindi-

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cate it, 'twere not so trancendently *ignoble*, but it most frequently falls upon those, who have made their beds in the dust; who have chang'd their own *Form*, and cannot secure their *Writings* from the same *fate*: Nay, 'tis yet more frequently *those*, whom we have all reason to suppose, and most of us profess to believe, *glorified Saints*; and this superadds a daring presumption to all other circumstances of the guilt, and heightens an injustice into Sacriledge. It has always been held the most detestable sort of *forgery* to counterfeit *Testaments*, though the *Testator* were of never so low a quality, or his *bequests* of never so mean a value: And shall it now pass for a piece of *commendable dexterity*, an art of manage to falsifie those *writings* by which the Fathers of the Church design'd to entail *truth* and *piety*, not *strife* and *faction* upon her? We know, *Necromancy* has justly been reputed one of the most horrid forms of *Sorcery*, because it enforced *dead* men to speak what the *living* were inquisitive to hear. I leave it to be consider'd what this wants of that, besides the dreadful *ceremonies* of the Incantation; certainly 'tis a guilt which nothing but our too familiar acquaintance with it could make unformidable. And indeed this whole method of serving a *cause* by such *sinister means* is so utterly repugnant to the Principles even of ingenuous nature, that we can scarce cast a greater scandal upon an Opinion, than to shew it needs such Aids. 'Tis by *Historians* branded as an execrable fact in him, who to secure himself from a *neighbour*

Prince, call'd the *Turk* into Chriſtendom: But ſure thoſe who to fortifie their ſide have brought in this Artifice of *calumniating* and *falſifying*, have done an Act no leſs *impious*; the conſtitution of Chriſtianity agreeing full as well with the *Alcoran* as with theſe *Pia fraudes*; as ſome of them who perhaps mean the *fraud* more than the *Piety* are pleas'd to call them. Nay indeed, they accord not much better with *Philoſophy* than *Divinity*, every man knows the nature of contraries is to combate and expel, not to cheriſh and ſupport one another. How abſurd is it then for thoſe, who ſay they deſign to advance *truth*, to make *falſhood* their Inſtrument. I wiſh they would experiment to accommodate their ſecular concerns at the ſame rate, let them *cool* them in the Fire, *warm* them in the Froſt, and *feed* themſelves by perpetual Faſting, and when they find cauſe to commend the efficacy of that Method, they may with fairer pretence in this higher inſtance reconcile the feuds of Reaſon and of Nature, and make a *lye* the Evidence of *Truth*. In the interim, it may well paſs for *Sophiſtry* as well as *ſin*; and doubtleſs whatever advantages are hop'd for to private Sects and Parties by this art, Chriſtian Religion in general is hugely prejudiced by it: For when men ſhall compare the veracity of Heathens with our falſhoods; learn from *Hiſtorians*, that among the *Perſians*, αἴσχιστον τὸ ψεύδεσθαι νενόμισται, *to lye was deem'd a fault of the greateſt turpitude*, and they therefore laid an ill Character upon perſons in debt, ὅτι ἀναγκη τὸν ὀφείλοντα καὶ τὸ ψεῦδος Θ. λέγειν, *becauſe*

because he that is so must needs tell lyes: And when they shall see in the Laws of *Cingû* a barbarous *Tartar*, Lying made a *capital crime*, and yet among Christian *Casuists* made a *holy artifice*, they will be tempted to think our *end* as fictitious as our *way*; and that our Religion has little countenance from *truth*, which is thus fain to make *lyes* its Refuge. Thus unhappily do these Arrows revert, not only on *those* who shoot them, but in the face of *Christianity* itself, which is defam'd, and traduced by those *slanders*, we aim at our *private adversaries*.

BUT besides this *direct*, there are other more *oblique* Ways of making *vice* subservient to *Religion*, or to speak more properly, of making *Religion* subservient to *vice*; for some Zealots of several parties, who more regard the *numerousness* than *purity* of their Professors, discerning how much the sensual part of mankind startles at the strictness of Gospel-precepts, are industrious to take off that discouragement, not by convincing them of the real divine sweetness and pleasantness of them, but by debasing and accommodating them more to the carnal appetite: Yet here men proceed not all alike, some use Christs yoke, as *Hananiah* did that of *Jeremy*, break it quite off; others only essay to slacken and alleviate it, that it may not pinch the lusts of *libertine Proselytes*: Of the first sort are such, as having made the *adherence* to their Party the infallible mark of *Sanctification*, and that Sanctification of *Election*, do from thence proclaim to all who are so qualified

a general Jubile and manumiſſion from the bond even of *Chriſt*'s as well as *Moſes*'s Law: or if ſome of them allow it to remain an impotent director, yet while they affirm that *God ſees no ſin in his Elect,* or if he do, beholds them as a Father does the harmleſs falls of his Child, rather with *ſmiles* than *anger,* they make the *violations* of it ſo ſafe, that they are too ſure to be many, and between abrogating and thus enervating a law, the *difference* is meerly verbal.

OF the ſecond ſort are ſome, who by indulgent and partial gloſſes, ſeek to mollifie the ſeverity of Chriſts commands. That contrive for their Clients not the *means* of Obeying, but the *arts* of Eſcaping them. Like the *unjuſt Steward,* teach their Lords Debtors to *write fifty inſtead of a Hundred*; and decide Caſes of conſcience more according to the *intereſts* and *paſſions* of men, than the *will* of Chriſt. There are a generation of men of whoſe Dexterity in this faculty the world has taken ſo much notice that I need not name them, a ſort of eaſie *Caſuiſts* who ſeem to have erected a *Court of Equity* to relieve men againſt the *rigour* of *divine Law*; and there is little doubt but they ſhall find enough ready to make ſuch *appeals*: Men love to be Chriſtians as Cheap as they can, and therefore will cloſe with that party, which offers the eaſieſt terms: And then while theſe ſpiritual *Pioneers* do thus enlarge the narrow way, make it a road as well for the Beaſt as the Man, the *brutiſh ſenſual,* as well as *rational divine* Part of us, no wonder though Sholes of

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Converts throng in to them. But 'tis to be consider'd that all this while this is winning Proselytes to themſelves, not to God; the gaining them to a *Sect*, not a *Religion*; at leaſt not to that pure religion, and undefiled, which the grand Author of our Faith has both exemplified, and propos'd to us; for how much that ſuffers by this way of propugning private opinions, is more than enough apparent. Yet ſo ambitious are our prime leaders of ſuch Trophies, that in order to them ſome are ſaid to aſcend yet a ſtep higher, and beſides this general encouragement they give to mens luſts by *taking off* Reſtraints, do in ſome caſes actually *promote* and *excite* them. For when they ſee a licentious perſon whoſe *acqueſt* they judge beneficial to their *cauſe*, they have artifices of fomenting his riots, do not only take off the *bridle*, but uſe the *ſpur* alſo, hoping that at the rebound it may conduce to their *End*. If any think it impoſſible it ſhould do ſo, let them conſider that among our various Opinions ſome there are which ſell Heaven much cheaper than others dare, that allow ſuch *eaſie attonements* as the moſt *habituated ſinner* need not deſpair of: and then the moſt infallible means to aſcertain ſuch to that ſide, is to make them too bad for any other. For when a man is reſolute to keep his *ſins* while he *lives*, and yet unwilling to relinquiſh all *hopes* when he *dies*, 'tis more than probable he will embrace that profeſſion which bids faireſt to the reconciling thoſe ſo diſtant intereſts; and therefore the *greater malefactor* he is,

the more ſure he will be *to fly to the horns of the Altar*; the nearer ſinking, the apter to catch at theſe reeds; ſo that the Project is not *impolitick*, though God knows ſo *impious*, that 'tis much fitter for the School of *Machiavil* than of *Chriſt*; and ſeems to verifie that imputation as to a part of Chriſtians, which *Julian* once as falſly as maliciouſly affixt upon the whole: that *their Church was an Aſylum and ſanctuary for the moſt flagitious offenders, and protected thoſe guilts to which no other religion allowed any Expiation.* 'Tis indeed ſo horrid that I cannot think there are many *conſciences* ſo cauteriz'd by this fiery *zeal* as to admit it, yet that ſome have done it, there is too much certainty, and therefore 'tis no improper inſtance in our preſent argument; for if mens *eagerneſs* to ſupport their ſeveral ſides, can tranſport them to ſuch *attempts* as theſe, 'tis abundant Evidence how much Chriſtianity loſes by theſe conteſts of under-factions, which while they pretend to *guard*, do indeed *invade* her under her own Colours.

BUT beſides the faults men commit with this immediate *avowed aſpect* upon their religion, there are others which ſlily ſhroud themſelves under the *skirt* of its *mantle*: I mean thoſe *Sins* of common life, which though they pretend not to advance the cauſe, yet when acted by a *Zealot* are thought to be overwhelm'd by his heroick *Piety*. Indeed men who make themſelves ſo much work about others *faith*, are ſeldom at leiſure to regulate their own *practice*, and ſo have no way

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of ſtating their accounts with God, but by balancing the *exceſs* of the one againſt the *defects* of the other: How ſuch reckonings will paſs the grand Audit, 'tis I think not hard to divine; but in the interim, it keeps them very cheerful and ſecure, teaches them a Receipt to retain all their *Sins*, and yet loſe none of their *confidence*; ſo that when they have immerſt themſelves in all filthineſs both of Fleſh and Spirit, they can truſt their zeal to refine them from all that Droſs. Nor does it only thus reconcile them to their own vices, but to other mens alſo, whoſe moſt brutiſh ſenſualities they can look on with perfect patience, nay even *Atheiſm* itſelf can have *fair Quarter*: They are not much diſcompoſed to ſee men have *no religion*, 'tis only the having *one different* from their own that awakes their indignation; then like *Saul* when ſeiz'd on by the *evil ſpirit*, they caſt about their Javelins, think no rigor too great on ſuch a provocation; yet even here they have intervals, and the very ſame perſons who are thus at odds upon a *religious*, can unite upon a *vitious* account. Thoſe who mutually denounce *damnation* to each other, can with full accord combine in thoſe *practices* which will aſcertain it to them both, as if they ſo much fear'd to have their *predictions* defeated, that they would be each others *convoy* to the land of darkneſs. Thoſe that will by no means meet at the *Church*, know not when to part at the *Tavern*, and though they will not joyntly partake of the *Cup of the Lord*, are yet very ſociable at the *Cup*

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of Devils; I mean thoſe exceſſive debauches, which are a moſt acceptable drink-offering to thoſe infernal ſpirits. Have we not ſeen many whoſe diſtant opinions have faſtned upon one another the brand of *Antichriſtianiſm*, who have yet like *Gog* and *Magog* joyn'd againſt the holy City? And thoſe who could never agree on the way of ſetting up *Chriſts Throne*, have yet been very unanimous in pulling down the *Kings*. Thus alas, do we juſtle one another out of the *narrow path* that leads to life, but can hand in hand run our Carier in the *broad way* of deſtruction. And doubtleſs this great unevenneſs, theſe ſpiritual feuds, and carnal endearments between the ſame perſons; this *impetuous zeal*, and as *impetuous luſts* in the ſame breaſts could never be, did not men depend ſo confidently on the *one*, as to think it will commute, and ſatisfie for the *other*. But alas, how groundleſs a Preſumption this is, the whole tenor of the Goſpel does abundantly witneſs. In all that grand *Charter* where is there the leaſt Clauſe importing ſuch an *immunity*? I am ſure there are multitudes that aſſert the contrary. Indeed the whole frame of the Evangelical covenant is totally againſt it: That requiring an entire uniform Sanctity, and allowing no other *priviledge* to the *ſins* of the moſt knowing Profeſſors, but a *prehominence* in *puniſhment*, the being beaten with many *ſtripes*. And when 'tis conſider'd that the *end* of all religion is but the drawing us to a *conformity* with God, the impreſſing on us ſome Character of his eternal goodneſs and holineſs

holineſs, 'twill be as abſurd as impious to believe that our *zeal* to any Religion can abſolve us from that *purity* which is the end and deſign of all. And while this is the way men take to approve their piety, 'tis no marvel to find ſo *many* Chriſtians, and ſo *little* Chriſtianity in the world: for that is not to be eſtimated by the *number* of its profeſſors, but by their *obedience* to its Rules, and he that gives up his *name* to it and not his *heart*, will receive as little *advantage* by it, as he brings *honour* to it, and how little that is in reſpect of its internal Efficacy, is I preſume competently evidenced.

BUT that we may more throughly diſcern how univerſally deſtructive our *wranglings* are to it, in all its *concerns*, let us a little examine whether they do not endammage it even in reſpect of *outward profeſſion* alſo. This may ſeem a ſtrange Query to thoſe who think their *diſputes* about Religion are to denominate them the great *confeſſors* of the Age: yet certainly there is but too much ground not only for the *enquiry*, but to reſolve it in the *affirmative*. And if it prove ſo, 'twill infer but ſadly to thoſe who having laid the whole ſtreſs of their Hopes upon their zeal to advance their Faith, will be found to have *pull'd down* more than they have *built up*. Now Chriſtianity may in reſpect of profeſſion decay two ways, either in its *hopes*, or in its *poſſeſſion*, the one in relation to *Aliens*, the other to *Diſciples*. The firſt by hindring the acceſs of *new* Converts, the ſecond by ſtaggering or alienating

ting the *old*, and both theſe ways ſhe viſibly appears to ſuffer by our diviſions. And firſt if we conſult but our experience, if we truſt but our own obſervations, we cannot but confeſs that the Goſpel has long been at a great ſtand: That that *Sun* which at its firſt ariſing was like *David*'s, *Pſal.* 19. ſurrounded the world in a vigorous efficacious motion, is ſince become like *Joſhuah*'s, *Joſh.* 10. 12. arreſted in its courts: nay like *Hezekiah*'s, gone backward, *Iſa.* 38. 8. *Mahumetiſm* (if not *Paganiſm*) having long taken up its ſeat in divers of the moſt flouriſhing Apoſtolick plantations. A ſad change, that from the daily and numerous acceſſion of the firſt times, it ſhould now become a kind of *Prodigy*, a piece of *news*, ſcarce heard in an Age, that one ſingle *Proſelyte* is gain'd to the *Church*; yet that thus it is, is too obvious to be denied. And truly it is not much leſs apparent that our diſſentions have in a great degree contributed to it. For firſt, as to the *extirpation* of the Eaſtern Churches, he that ſhall examine the records of thoſe times, will have cauſe to ſay, their Janglings and Diviſions were not only in a *moral* or *divine*, but even in a *proper natural ſenſe*, the Inſtruments of it. The *Turk* only coming in at thoſe breaches which themſelves had made, nor had their *Candleſtick* probably been removed, had they not firſt abus'd its *light*, to the ſetting themſelves in *Combuſtion*. That the ſame *cauſe* has not yet had the ſame *effect* among us, is owing not to its *unaptneſs* to produce it, but to the admirable *patience* and *mercy* of God, who yet withholds that

that fatal Judgment, which we do our parts to pull upon our ſelves; our mutual violences againſt one another herein unhappily combining and making one united force againſt us all. But though the *divine goodneſs* hath hitherto ſo countermined our *treachery* to our ſelves, as not to ſuffer us to enjoy that ſtate of darkneſs we have ſo courted, yet certainly our *contentions* are extremely acceſſary to the continuing it upon others, our many *new* and *wandring lights*, however they fail of having that Property of the *Pillar of fire*, *Exod.* 14. of illuminating and conducting the *Iſraelites*, yet too much anſwer its other, in becoming *cloud* and *darkneſs* to the *Ægyptians*; there being ſcarce any thing more apt to intercept the beams of the Sun of righteouſneſs from the Heathen world, every of thoſe *little encloſures* our Factions have made in the Church, becoming a *great partition-wall* to keep others out of it. This may be made evident in ſeveral reſpects. As firſt, in relation to thoſe many *moral obliquities* in which our eager diſputes do (as hath already been ſhewed) betray us, which cannot but give ſo much *ſcandal* to any conſidering man, that we can ſcarce hope any can turn to us as to a better Religion, but will rather think it the way to relinquiſh all; to obliterate thoſe *native impreſſions* of Piety and Honeſty they brought with them into the world, ſo that if we expect any *Proſelytes* it muſt be only ſuch as would live *worſe* than mere *nature* allows them.

BUT

BUT this though as important a conſideration as can well be, I ſhall not here inſiſt on, having in the ſecond Section given ſome inſtances how apt our *Morality* is to defame our *Divinity*, and confirm men in Oppoſition to it. But though this be a *great*, yet 'tis not the *only* means by which our Diſſentions hinder the progreſs of the Goſpel, for they do not only make *infidels* leſs inclinable to receive it, but *us* to propagate it. Thoſe do ſo buſie and engroſs us, that there is neither leiſure nor heart left for this. Our *activeſt ſpirits* are ſo engaged at home in aſſerting their *private quarrels*, that all ſuch *foreign deſigns* are forgot. For as in *Civil*, ſo in *Eccleſiaſtical* concerns, every one is more Induſtrious to advance his *peculiar* intereſt than that of the *community*, accordingly we find innumerable promulgers of every new Opinion. No *Sect* wants its *Apoſtles* to propagate and diffuſe it; but where are there any that have the like care for the main *Root* of Chriſtian Religion, which they have for theſe little *Twigs* and *Off-ſets* which they have planted in their own Gardens; how many ages muſt we look back to find a man that has made it his buſineſs to convert *Infidels* to the Faith. 'Tis true indeed there are ſome very magnificent relations of *modern attempts* this way, of great induſtry ſome have us'd to bring the moſt ſavage nations to the obedience of Chriſt: but if we examine, 'twill be obvious, the main deſign was to ſubject them to themſelves. 'Twas not ſo much their *Heatheniſm* as their *territories* they invaded,

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and such *Apoſtles* as theſe are ill qualified to make S. *Paul*'s profeſſion, 2 *Cor.* 12. 16. *I ſeek not yours but you.* And the ſucceſs of ſuch Eſſays have been anſwerable to the motive; they have won *riches* but not *Souls*. The *Goſpel* in one hand and a *ſword* in the other has made many *ſlaves*, but I fear few *Chriſtians*. Indeed, what encouragement had thoſe poor creatures to receive a Religion from their Oppreſſors? why ſhould they think that thoſe who tortured and kill'd their *bodies*, were really concern'd to ſave their *Souls*? or that thoſe who would not permit them to enjoy what was their own, meant to help them to any thing better? And while the *felicities* of another world were recommended to them only by *ſuch*, as had deprived them of all in *this*, we cannot wonder at their *little appetite* to embrace them; or to find the oppreſt *Indians* proteſt againſt that heaven where the *Spaniards* are to be their cohabitants. In ſhort, this is ſure ſuch a method of *Evangelizing*, as too widely differs from that which firſt planted the *Church*, to be likely to advance its *growth*: ſo that notwithſtanding all pretences of this kind, we may reſume our aſſertion, and conclude that our *inteſtine diſcords* (perhaps not thoſe alone) have diverted the *Zeal* of this more Chriſtian undertaking, and left a great part of the world under that invincible Ignorance S. *Paul* mentions, *Rom.* 10. 14. *How ſhall they call on him, in whom they have not believed, and how ſhall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard; and how ſhall they hear without a preacher?*

preacher? and God knows whether we have not herein provided better for their Excuſe than our own.

THERE is yet another way by which our *diviſions* impede their *converſion*, and that is by giving them *prejudice* to that Doctrine about which our ſelves cannot agree. 'Tis an univerſal Maxim that *truth is always conſonant to itſelf*; and therefore where they ſee ſo little *unity* they have too much *temptation* to doubt of Truth. He that wandring ſhould meet a Company that offer to conduct him to his journeys end, might reaſonably incline to deliver himſelf up to their *guidance*; but if he find them unagreed upon the way, one Diſputing for this, and another for that, and every one proteſting againſt all but his own; he would ſure retract his *confidence*, and think they offer'd him only more variety of miſtakes, reſolve it as ſafe to truſt himſelf to his *own* Errors as *other mens*. And this alas, ſeems to be too exact a parallel of the preſent caſe; we Chriſtians do ſo mutually damn one another, that a poor *Turk* or *Heathen* will think, he rather *multiplies* than *ends* his Danger by aſſociating himſelf with us; for there being ſo many parties, whichſoever he joyns himſelf to, there will be abundant odds againſt him; ſo that if he could be ſecur'd the truth were among us, yet the great difficulty of finding it out, would be a very diſheartning conſideration. Beſides men love in *tranſactions* of great Importance to have as *many*, and as *credible Vouchers* as may be, and upon that

that score 'twill ſure be but a cold inducement to any to turn *Chriſtian*, to foreſee, that when he has done ſo, he ſhall be *diſown'd* by far the greater part of that number, and that at his entrance into the *Church*, he ſhall be met with almoſt as many *Anathemas*, as when he was an *Infidel*. Nay, I ſcarce know whether I may call it an entrance into the *Church*, or rather into a *Conventicle*, or *particular Congregation*, our Schiſms and Separations having hardly left a poſſibility of *external communion* with the *univerſal Church*, ſince the communicating with one part of it, does infallibly Excommunicate from another. Thus have we placed our *flaming Sword* (though God knows no *Cherubim*) at the gate of our Paradiſe, and when God calls all men to the *waters of life*, our Contentions have made them like *thoſe of Marah*, ſo bitter and unpleaſant, as deters and averts men from them: Which as it is in the higheſt degree injurious to them, ſo is it contumelious to *him*, whoſe invitations are by this means fruſtrated; 'tis in ſome degree the evacuating one of the main *purpoſes* of Chriſts coming into the World, which was to *call men out of darkneſs into his marvellous light*, and as *He* was thus ſent by his Father, ſo alſo were the *Apoſtles* ſolemnly commiſſionated by him to preach to the Gentile world, who with indefatigable induſtry and reſolute ſufferings purſued the *charge*; and ſure this is competent evidence, that the deſign was of the greateſt and moſt weighty importance, and ſuch as can never be out dated,

till there ceaſe to be objects of it, unbelievers to convert: And by that let us meaſure the guilt of obſtructing it, which if we would impartially do, I aſſure my ſelf the moſt *paſſionate Bigot* of any Party muſt confeſs, that it infinitely out-weighs all the Piety his doctrine can pretend to, that his *peculiar* Church gains not ſo much as the *Catholick* loſes: And that how confidently ſoever he hath Canoniz'd his quarrels, they are indeed but the worſt ſort of Heathens, and ſerve to keep out the better. Yet beſides the miſchief they do in relation to thoſe that are *without*, they are extremely pernicious to thoſe that are *within*, and that not only to ſome *one Sect*, but like an *univerſal poyſon*, that is equally deadly to the moſt contrary complections, they operate on the moſt diſtant ranks of Profeſſors, the *tender* and the *obdurate*, the *ſcrupulous* and the *profane*. And firſt for the tender tremulous Chriſtian, 'tis eaſie to diſcern how much he muſt be diſtracted and amaz'd by them; for while he hears each Sect thunder out *Damnation* againſt each other, he cannot but be ſtartled at the *danger* of adhering to the *wrong*, and though that may a while excite his diligence to diſcover the *right*, yet when he comes to that inquiſition, he will meet with ſo many *Polemick intricacies* to entangle him, that after many turns, firſt to one ſide, and then to another, he will be apt to think the only *clue* to extricate him out of this *labyrinth* of many Religions, *is to abandon all.* Nor is this *mere ſpeculation* and *Conjecture*, God knows we have had ſucceſſively through

through the whole round of Error too many *practick experiments* of it. Several persons there have been, whose Zeal to find out *truth* by an unhappy rule of *False*, directed them to allow of *every Error*: While like *sick men*, who desire to die good-cheap, they put themselves into the hands of any *Empirick*; follow each bold pretender, that has the impudence to talk of Truth, till Superstition ends in Profanation, *Godliness* proves *Atheism*, and by having been of *many Sects*, at last have *no Religion*. And surely this is a most unhappy Effect of our discords, thus to be *stumbling-blocks* in our brothers way, and when we remember the woes pronounc'd against those that shall Scandalize any of the little ones, 'twill be strange how men can think to approve their *Christianity*, by the ruine of their Brothers, or secure themselves of *Heaven* by keeping Others thence: For though Christ tells his Disciples there should be some that should think it a *service* to God *to kill their Bodies*, yet to phancy the *destroying of souls* so too, is a Deception of which we have neither *record* nor *prediction* in Holy Writ, and is a superfœtation of the spirit of delusion, peculiar to those who have placed their own sanctity in these religious wranglings, which serve to destroy it in other men. And as they thus serve on the one side to shipwrack the *faith* of these weak unstable Souls; so do they on the other advance the *impiety* of the daring sinner; for as they are Temptation to the *one*, so are they Pretense and Excuse to the *other* to bid defiance to all Religion. He

whoſe diſſolute *affections* have ſo long been courting his *underſtanding* to turn Atheiſt, will ſure not loſe the advantage of ſo plauſible an Argument as our *diviſions* afford him; and ſince his *luſts* engage him in an irreconcilable War againſt the *practick part* of Piety, he will moſt gladly embrace this occaſion of quarrel againſt the *Theory* alſo: So making himſelf entire, and extinguiſhing thoſe uneaſie regrets and miſgivings ariſing from the repugnancy of his *life* to his *belief*. It were not hard to give a *compendium* of theſe mens *Logick*, and draw out thoſe *Schemes* of Diſcourſe, by which from our *differences* in Religion they infer the *diſcarding* of all. But I fear theſe are already too well known, and where they are not, I ſhould be loth to be any mans Inſtructor. This is I am ſure too palpable, that how *fallacious* ſoever theſe Reaſonings are, they have been very *operative*, as appears by the number of thoſe *avowed Atheiſts* among us, who placing themſelves *in the ſeat of the ſcorner*, give themſelves much pleaſing Divertiſement by *deriding* our eager *ſcuffles* about that which they think nothing. If any man thinks that the *Church* is no loſer by the defection of ſuch *Libertines*, I muſt be allowed to diſſent from him: For firſt, there are examples of the moſt vicious Perſons, that have been reduced, and while they retain their Chriſtian *belief*, that lays ſuch undeniable obligations to good *life*, that whenever they reſume their *reaſon*, they muſt take up *vertue* alſo with it; ſo that there is an equal poſſibility of their being *good*, that there

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is of their being *rational*: But when all hope and fear of a future estate is disclaim'd, when those cords are broken which should pull them up from the Dungeon, then, and not before is their state visibly desperate. But besides this possibility of *recovering them*, the danger of *losing others* is to be considered. Bold *Atheism* is like a raging *Pestilence*, which taints the very *Air*, so that those impious *discoursings* which are the *effects* of some mens Vices, may be the *cause* of others; and we too often see that those who ascended themselves *by degrees*, do *in an instant* advance their *Proselytes* to the height of Irreligion, as appears by the strange proficiency of some, whose Years allow them not to have arrived to it otherwise than *per Saltum*. And sure this spreading Contagion has been so destructive to the Church, that it were to be wisht, the mere titular Christians had rather remain'd such, than thus to have averted others from being so much.

AND now if all these scandals be worth our regret, if the emboldening and exasperating the *bad*, the corrupting the *innocent*, and the decay of Christian *profession* consequent to both, be *formidable Evils*, we know where to charge the *guilt*. Our *contentions* must be arraigned as *accessaries*, if not *principals* in the case: And then sure it will befit our angry Zealots to consider, whether this be the way of *advancing Gods truth*, *or what account they will give to the Lord of the Vineyard*, who while they pretend to dress and prune the *branches*, do thus debilitate and destroy the *roots*.

Nay, indeed in this they are treacherous even to their own pretenſions, for all thoſe ſeveral Religions which they ſo tenderly cheriſh, have no *proper root* of their own, but like Excreſcencies, ſpring out of the *main ſtock* of Chriſtianity, live by its juice and moiſture, and conſequently, can never hope to ſurvive it. And then certainly there can be nothing more ridiculous, than to expreſs their kindneſs to the *one*, by ways that are ſo ruinous to the *other*. 'Tis as if a *Paſſenger* in a Ship ſhould to fortifie his *private Cabin*, tear up the *planks* and expoſe the whole Veſſel to ſinking: Yet thus prepoſterouſly do many of our *chief Pilots* apply their care. In the mean time, it cannot but be a very *delightful proſpect* to the grand Enemy of Souls, to ſee us thus buſily promote his *intereſt*, lay *ſnares* for our ſelves, and by our own *folly* do that which all his *ſubtilties* could never compaſs. Nor can we think but he will be as *officious* to us as is poſſible, while we are thus employed, will help us to contrive our *Turrets*, whileſt he ſees we pluck out *ſtones* from the *foundation* to build them with; nor ſhall we ever want *new modles* of Churches, ſo long as they thus help to deſtroy the *old*; and how aptly they are fitted for that Purpoſe, needs (I ſuppoſe) no farther Demonſtration.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Diſputes, in reference to Civil Peace.

AND now ſure we cannot but conclude our *Contentions* highly injurious to *Chriſtianity*, that thus aſſault it both in the *Practick* and *Theory*: And indeed how fierce ſoever our quarrels are with one another, the heavieſt blows are ſure to fall on that, which as in its conſtitution is of the moſt Pacifick temper imaginable, ſo it has the common fate of reconcilers to ſuffer from all parties. But *Godlineſs having the promiſe as well of this life as of that which is to come*, it often happens that there is ſuch a conſent between our *ſpiritual* and *ſecular* Concerns, that the Miſchiefs that oppreſs the *one* do reflect on the *other*: And indeed Religion when intire and united, is one of the beſt bonds of *Civil* as well as *Eccleſiaſtical* Peace, (as even thoſe atteſt, who defying all other ends of it, do yet admit it a uſeful State-engine;) from whence 'tis conſequent, that the *diſtractions* and *diviſions* in that muſt have proportionably a contrary influence, and infect *communities* with Diſcord, Tumult and Diſorders. And this is an *effect* with which I think not unfit to bring up the *rear* of the foregoing Miſchiefs, it being not ſo purely Secular, as not to

ſuit our preſent ſubject; for *outward order* and *unity* can never be ſo innocently diſturb'd, but that *Chriſtianity* muſt be wounded in it alſo: And beſides, it may perhaps obtain more conſideration than the former, as being of a nature wherein the generality of men will think themſelves the moſt concern'd; for though there be many that can look on the ruine both of Chriſtian practice and profeſſion, with *Gallio*'s indifference, *Acts* 18. 17. and care for none of thoſe things, yet when the ſiege draws cloſer, when they find themſelves begirt in their worldly intereſts, and that the ſame Deluge that overwhelms *Churches*, may bear down *Palaces* alſo, perhaps they may think the matter not ſo contemptible. And firſt, as to the truth of the obſervation, the *World* has too long groaned under the *Experiment* to need farther proof. That *bitterneſs* which firſt tainted the *waters of the Sanctuary*, hath from thence diffus'd itſelf into our *common ſtreams*, and like the *Ægyptian Plague*, left none uncorrupted: For whether we look upon Families, Neighbourhoods, Kingdoms, any the *leaſt*, or any the *greateſt* Societies, we find the miſerable *Trophies* of our *holy Wars*, in Factions and Confuſions; I wiſh I could not ſay Rapine and Bloud alſo. For the *firſt* of theſe, the domeſtick Jars caus'd by different Opinions, the *Inſtances* are numerous, or rather innumerable, which our *own age* and *nation* afford us. How many Servants have on this ſcore been at defiance with their Maſters? Children with their Parents? Nay, Wives with their Husbands?

Husbands? Such an unhappy force is there in *miſtaken Zeal*, that it diſſolves the *cloſeſt bonds*, violates all *obligations* natural or civil, while under pretence of ſervice to God, like the *Phariſees* Corban, it evacuates all duty to man; and this has made ſuch ruptures and diviſions in Families, that that delightful proſpect the *Pſalmiſt* ſo much commends, that of *Brethrens dwelling together in unity*, *Pſalm* 133. is ſcarce any where to be met with; but inſtead of that, ſuch rancor and bitterneſs, treachery and malice, as if men either miſtook Chriſts *prediction*, *Luke* 12. 52. for a *precept*, or at leaſt were willing to advance his *Prophetick* Office upon the ruine of his *Kingly*, and to verifie his *præſage* by breaking his *command*. And as the Oeconomical order and peace is thus diſturb'd, ſo if he that miſſes quiet *at home* ſhould ſeek for it *abroad*, he will ſoon find himſelf diſappointed, and diſcern that as the *ſocieties* grow greater, ſo do the *diſorders* alſo, and that private Strifes do as much combine to make *parties* and *factions*, as Families do to make *Cities* and *Corporations*. By this means that mutual communication, by which the Members of civil bodies ſhould not only benefit one another, but ſecure the whole, is interrupted, and men live not as *neighbours*, but *ſpies*, always upon deſigns of Entrapping and Enſnaring; for while they look on one another as *enemies to God*, they think that reſcinds all obligations of *friendſhip among themſelves*, and when Religion bears the *Standard*, the *War* will be concluded neceſſary and honourable.

able. But though it be ſo in *imagination only*, tis ſure there are ſome, who make it *really profitable*; for as in moſt *Camps*, the greater Number are attracted rather by hope of *booty* than concern for the *cauſe*; ſo here, many men *liſt* themſelves under one Party, that they may have pretence to *prey* upon the reſt. And to that End ſeveral very commodious *Axioms* have been taken up. As that *No faith is to be kept with Hereticks*; that *Dominion is founded in Grace*, &c. by ſuch meaſures as theſe the goods of the *Ægyptians* become lawful prizes to any, that pleaſe to call themſelves *Iſraelites*; and indeed *Jews* they may be call'd in that notion we vulgarly uſe it of *unjuſt* and *cruel extortioner*: But ſure not ſuch *Iſraelites* as Chriſt defines *Nathaniel*, *Joh.* 1. 47. *without guile*: For having thus conſecrated their frauds, and found an expedient of ſerving *God* and *Mammon* together, there is no piece of *deceit* either too big, or too little for them; no *tranſaction* ſo important, which can oblige their *fidelity*; none ſo trivial as to diſcourage their *rapine*: Opportunity is the only meaſure and rule of their attempts, by this means no *Obligation* of Contract, no *Laws* of Commerce can eſcape unviolated; every thing is lawful that may weaken the wicked, and that *zeal* which makes men *Saints* in the Church or Conventicle, can make them *Thieves* in the Shop or Market. Thus is Piety made an Engine of rapine, and by theſe *religious riots*, all *boundaries* wherewith Laws or Equity have fenc'd mens diſtinct *properties*, are thrown down: And ſure this

this is a moſt carnal conſequent of our ſpiritual debates, and bids fair towards the reducing us to that ſtate of common Hoſtility, which ſome have phancied to be the *Original condition* of mankind: For it renders commerce ſo dangerous, that men may within a while think it ſafer to truſt their own *ſtrengths*, than to the ſhelter of thoſe *Laws* and *Civil compacts*, which they ſee ſo avowedly evacuated. And upon this account, though the Injury be immediately done to *private* perſons, it becomes a *publick* miſchief: Yet alas, theſe are but the more moderate *effects* of our Diſſentions; they afford more expedite and compendious ways of publick ruine; the *defrauding* or *undermining* of a few Neighbours, are *petty prizes* for thoſe that think they have the ſole right to the Creature, and are thoſe *Meek* who are to *inherit the Earth*, and every ſuch acqueſt only ſerves to fleſh them for a farther chaſe. The *ſpoils* of a broken Kingdom will afford ſomething worth the *ſcrambling* for: And nothing more fit to *break it* than a pretence of Religion, which like the *ſtone* that ſmote *Nebuchadnezzars* Image, has ſhivered the moſt goodly Monarchies. And accordingly, we ſee no *Engine* is more conſtantly us'd by men of Seditious ſpirits, to diſturb and ſubvert Governments: Indeed there can be nothing ſo advantageouſly fitted for the purpoſe. For ſhould ſuch perſons unmask their *deſign*, and ſhew it in its *native uglineſs*, ſhould they avow the ſhaking of a *Kingdom* merely to eſtabliſh themſelves in a condition of *wealth* and *grandeur*, the new moulding

moulding of a Government only that they might ſhape their own ſhares in it, 'twere impoſſible they ſhould find any abettors; for though the *multitude* are always in preparation for *change*, yet 'tis not on Intuition of benefit to ſome *private perſons*, but of ſomewhat wherein *themſelves* may partake: Nor is even the madneſs of the people mad enough, to expoſe all their *own intereſt*, and moſt important concerns only to promote *thoſe of others*. It has therefore always been both the rule and practice for ſuch deſigners to ſuborn the *publick intereſt* to countenance and cover their *private*; to cry up *Diana* to ſecure their own *gain*, and to make the ſeduced *Populacy* like the *Jackal* to the *Lion*, hunt that prey which themſelves mean to devour. And of all thoſe artifices by which ſuch *Incendiaries* have ſet Kingdoms in a *flame*, none has been more univerſally ſucceſful than the *prætext* of Religion, which is thought ſo *creditable a cauſe* to engage in, as can convert the *infamous titles* of Rebel and Traitor into thoſe of Patriot and Saint, and conſequently, take off all diſcouragement ariſing from the diſreputation of ſuch an enterprize: And no leſs potent is it in ſolving the ſcruples of its unlawfulneſs; for by a dexterous anticipation, it makes Conſcience a *party*, that it may exclude it from being *judge*, and by that one fallacy of ſuppoſing *Religion* to be *a juſt ground of quarrel*, make way for all the wild conſequences deducible from that *falſe principle*: And indeed where that is throughly faſtned, the *miſchiefs* are not only *great* but *incurable*, and yet the

the more ſo by how much the perſon is more zealous. For alas, what will it avail to tell ſuch a man, 'tis a ſin to *fight againſt his King*: when he will tell you 'tis a greater not to *fight for his God*: That he contracts a *heinous guilt* in violating the *peace* of the Church, when he with as great confidence believes, he *merits* in propagating its *truth*. That he is accountable for the *blood* of his Brethren; when he thinks he has like the *Levites*, *Exod.* 32. conſecrated himſelf in it, and offer'd it an acceptable *ſacrifice* to God. Thus unhappily are theſe men fortified in their *ſin*, by preſuming it their *Vertue*, and while the *furious zeal* of ſuch is made ſubſervient to the *wicked craft* of others, 'tis a moſt *apt inſtrument* of publick Miſchief, there being no attempt ſo deſperate, which ſuch may not be put upon, who are methinks us'd, as *Hanibal* is ſaid to have done thoſe Oxen, whoſe *horns* he firſt fired, and then ſent them to diſturb the *Roman* camp: Theſe *men* as thoſe *beaſts* are found very uſeful for the moleſting of others; but commonly all they acquire to themſelves, is the *ſmart* of their own *flames*. Few of thoſe who thus in the ſimplicity of their heart follow an *Abſolom* or a *Sheba*, that do not either miſcarry together with the *deſign*, or elſe live to diſcern how much their *credulity* was abuſed; and that both *religion* (however pretended) and *thoſe* that fought for it, were only made *properties* to promote the *luſts of thoſe* who deſpiſed both. But 'tis unneceſſary to inſiſt farther on the *effects* of ſuch religious Fury, of which *we of this Nation* have had ſo many and ſo *coſtly evidences*,

ces, as far tranſcend the moſt *tragical deſcriptions*. God grant we may never have other than our *paſt experiences* to meaſure them by: But certainly there is little reaſon to be ſecure, ſo long as the *root* of them, our *ſpeculative differences* daily encreaſe; for unleſs we could ſuppoſe an Age of ſuch innocence, that there ſhould be none who would *take* any undue Advantages, 'tis ſure there will be enough *given*: And indeed when we reflect upon our paſt Diſtractions, and conſider how trivial the *matter* of moſt of thoſe debates was, whoſe *manner* has been ſo cruelly ſolemn; how our ſlighteſt *problemes* have been writ in *blood*, that many Thouſands have been made *naked* to keep the *Surplice off* a few mens backs, and we have pulled down our *Churches* in diſpleaſure at the *windows*, when I ſay theſe and a Thouſand the like are conſidered, we muſt conclude that there can never *want* Occaſion to them that (in the *Apoſtles* Phraſe) *deſire* Occaſion. The *lighteſt diſtempers* in the Church being *contagious*, and moſt apt (when fomented by ambitious deſigners) to beget an *univerſal Plague* in the Common-wealth. And now who can without horror conſider theſe miſerably perverted *effects* of Chriſtian Religion, that *that* which was deſign'd the moſt *inviolable bond of unity*, ſhould like thoſe curles of entangled ſnakes with which *Erinnys* is ſaid to have infuriated *Athemas* and *Ino*, become the *fatal incendiary of the mortalleſt hatred*. That *that Oeconomy* which was meant to *regulate*, ſhould be the Inſtrument of *confounding* and *imbroyling* the World; and

a *Goſpel of Peace* ſhould thus be made the *Incentive to war*, and create fiercer quarrels than thoſe it was to have compos'd. To *turn the Grace of God into wantonneſs*, is juſtly branded as a *great* Crime, but ſure to turn it *into malice* is yet a *greater*. And though every ſin offers violence to our religion, yet *this* is of all others the moſt *barbarous*, thus to make it Aſſaſſinate itſelf, become a kind of *Felo de ſe*, and contribute to its own ruine. And that this is the caſe, is I preſume ſufficiently evident in all the *foregoing inſtances*, which as they are moſt obviouſly the *effect* of our eager Diſputes, ſo are they no leſs viſibly *deſtructive* to Chriſtianity in all its intereſts, leave it neither *root* nor *branch*, neither *inward* Vigor, nor *outward* Luſtre; ſo at once rendring it both unfertile and unamiable. 'Twas a piece of hoſtile Severity againſt *Moab*, to *fill the land with ſtones, thereby to render it barren*, 2 King. 3. 25. The ſlingers went about, and ſmote it: but what *that* ſuffered from *profeſt Enemies*, the *Church* daily ſuſtains from thoſe that call themſelves her beſt *friends*. Our *Benjamites* are ſo in love with their skill of ſlinging to a hairs breadth, their nice Criticiſms, Diſtinctions, and Subtilties, have caſt abroad ſo many *ſtones of contention*, that the Church is become perfect *quarry*, utterly *ſteril* and *unfruitful*, as to all thoſe good works for the production whereof, ſhe was ſo peculiarly fenced and cultivated by God; nay, 'twere well if *barrenneſs* were the worſt, and that ſhe had not on the other ſide acquir'd an unhappy

degenerous

degenerous fertility: But what a numerous and accurſed Iſſue ſpring from this unpeaceable temper, the foregoing conſiderations do too ſadly demonſtrate; and I doubt not every attentive Obſerver will be able to add *more* (though not *truer*) Inſtances; and beſides to diſcern that this *ſpurious brood* like that of *Hagar* is grown ſo wantonly inſolent as to deſpiſe the *right heir* of the Promiſe. The true *Goſpel-Graces* of Meekneſs, Peaceableneſs and univerſal Charity are accounted *Earthly phlegmatick qualities*, we diſclaim that *Holy Ghoſt* which deſcends in the appearance of the *Dove*, nay or in *fire* either, unleſs it be like that of *Elijah*, to conſume all that diſguſt us. Nor do we meaſure our *Religion* ſo much, by the oppoſition it makes to our *luſts*, as to thoſe whom we firſt make, and then call our *enemies*. Thus miſerably have we changed the Scene, and by *calling evil good, and good evil*, have accumulated injuries upon our oppreſſed Chriſtianity, not only robb'd it of its *rule*, but of its *reputation* alſo. And do we daily thus ſee *Iſhmael* mocking *Iſaac*, and ſhall we not think it time to caſt out the Bond-woman and her Son? Shall we for ever cheriſh this generation of *Vipers* to tear out the *bowels* of our common-Mother? I pray God the Queſtion have not as much of *praſage* as *expoſtulation*. For if we conſider the preſent ſtate of things, how our *contentions* plead not only *right* but *preſcription*, there ſeems not much hope of diſpoſſeſſing them, and yet leſs, when 'tis remembred, how they have entwiſted themſelves,

not

not only with the *paſſions*, but *intereſts* of men; two ſuch *potent Abettors* as will buoy up the moſt *forlorn cauſe*. The truth is, there are many *ſubterraneous ſprings* which feed *this Ocean*, and though religion and piety be on all hands demurely pretended, yet as we have ſeen the *effects* of our debates very *diſconſonant* to ſuch a Profeſſion; ſo if we examine the *originals* and *cauſes*, we ſhall find them for the moſt part as *widely diſtant*. It may not be amiſs to take a ſhort view of ſome of them; for though I cannot hope the *diſcovery* of the Cauſes will contribute to the *general cure*, yet perhaps it may prove *Antidote* to ſome particular perſons, who will be the leſs apt to admire the verdure of the *leaves* (the flouriſhing appearances of *zeal* and *piety*) when they find both *fruit* and *root* of ſo poiſonous a quality.

CHAP. XIII.

A Survey of the Cauſes of Diſputes; and firſt, Pride.

AND in this inqueſt we find Pride already arraigned to our hands, by the wiſeſt of Men, *Prov.* 13. 10. *only by pride cometh contention.* It is indeed a moſt prolifick vice, and there are few *ſins* to which it is not either a *parent* or *nurſe*: but there is ſcarce any

which does more betray its immediate deſcent from it than this of *ſtrife* and *debate*, which has ſo many of the *lineaments* and *features* of the deform'd Mother, as ſufficiently atteſt its *extraction*. And as this is true of *all* ſtrifes in general, ſo particularly of *thoſe* whereof we now treat: for Pride being itſelf an internal ſin, it has ſuch a neighbourhood with all the notions and ſpeculations of the mind, that it eaſily makes impreſſions on them: Nor are we to wonder that the Sacredneſs of divine things is not *Amulet* enough againſt its *Charms*, when we remember that the *firſt act* of Pride that ever was committed, was levelled even *at God* himſelf; and as it took up its firſt ſeat in a ſpiritual ſubſtance, ſo has it ever ſince, never acted more *naturally*, and therefore more *vigorouſly*, than about ſpiritual matters. Of this the Church in all ages has had many coſtly Experiments; for if we trace the Catalogues of Hereſies from *Simon Magus* his days down to our own, we ſhall find Pride a *principal Actor* in every *Scene*, though perhaps in *various dreſſes*. For though Pride be always in the general an affectation of ſome tranſcendency, yet it differs as to the particular object, according to the ſeveral eſtimates men make of excellencies. So that the *propugners* of new Opinions, though they have this *common aim*, that they ſeek their *own exaltation*, yet do not always do it in the *ſame inſtances*. For example, *ſome* have coveted the repute of *profound Inquiſitors*, and this Vanity has prompted them to dive ſo deep into the

the *bowels* of every the *plaineſt doctrine*, till at laſt they have twiſted and entangled them into the moſt *perplexing difficulties*. Theſe *Navigators* think they have never ſail'd ſucceſsfully, till they have found out a *Terra incognita*, though God knows they bring nothing from thence for the benefit of the habitable world; nor make it their buſineſs to *reſolve* Doubts, but *ſtart* them. *Another ſort* of men there are of ſo faſtidious and petulant wits, that they diſdain an *opinion* of which themſelves are not the *Authors*; they love not to have their underſtandings preſcrib'd to, by the preconceptions of others, how divinely ſoever inſpir'd, and will rather have a Religion of their *own making*, than of *his* whom they pretend to worſhip. And this, 'tis to be doubted, is the bottom of the great *veneration* ſome have paid to *Reaſon*, which they have ſet up in the *Throne*, not only in defiance of *blind implicit aſſent*, but even of *divine revelation*. But in the mean time 'tis to be obſerv'd, that 'tis not reaſon *in general*, the common excellency of our nature that is thus advanc'd, but every mans own *private* and *individual*; which upon a juſt ſcanning will often be found the moſt diſtant thing from what it is call'd: *Paſſion* and *Phancy*, by that omnipotent advantage of being a mans own, often paſſing for *deep diſcourſe* and *ratiocination*: and what a fruitful harveſt of Tares ſuch ſeed is apt to produce, our *reaſon* would inform us if our *experience* did not. To theſe we may add *another rank* of men, who vehemently thirſting after a *name* in the

world, hope to acquire that by being the *diſſeminators* of *novel doctrines*; they think while they go on in the *beaten track*, they ſhall be obſcur'd in the *Throng*; the only way to make themſelves conſpicuous is to be ſingular: Thus fondly chuſing to be *eminent*, though by the infamous Characters of *Heretick* or *Schiſmatick*, and (like him that fired *Diana*'s Temple to ſecure himſelf from oblivion) build themſelves *Monuments* of the *Churches ruines*: and ſure this *Theudas* his ambition of being ſome body, has helpt to raiſe more *opinions* than he did *men*. Yet commonly it anſwers it even in that circumſtance alſo; for when by *ſeparating themſelves* from the *unity of the faith*, they have rendred themſelves remarkable, their next aim is to have *others joyn* to them; and ſo they may have the honour of being *leaders*, care not though it be into the ditch. To be call'd of men *Rabbi*, *Rabbi*, is enchanting Muſick to any *Phariſee*, and ſerves like the Timbrels in *Tophet* to drown the cries not of their *Children*, but *Mother* ſcorching in the flames of their contention. Indeed ſo impetuous and uncontroulable is this kind of *vanity*, that like a mighty torrent, it bears down all before it, overwhelms not only the oppoſite *vertues*, but even all *vices* that are not of its own confederacy. Men can in this caſe lay ſevere reſtraints upon their moſt *intimate ſenſualities*, when they ſuſpect them *treacherous* to this grand Deſign. The *Wolf* ſhall be muzled and made to behave himſelf with the meekneſs beſeeming the *Sheeps* cloathing. The *Swine* ſhall

ſhall be waſht and by an unnatural violence with-held from the *mire*: All their rapacious and beaſtial *appetites* controul'd and made tame, that they worry not their *reputation*. And all this for a little naked *popularity*, for whoſe dear purchaſe, very many have thought fit to diveſt themſelves, both of lawful and unlawful *enjoyments*; and have thought the tumultuous *applauſe* of a few factious ſpirits worth all that *ſelf-denial*. But all Pride is not ſo perfectly *Camælion* as to ſubſiſt upon this *mere air*, there is another kind of it that propoſes to itſelf ſomething beyond this: ſuch is the affectation of rule and dominion, which though in reſpect of any real good to the ruler, is as very a *Chimera* as the former; yet commonly they that are under ſuch a *Juriſdiction*, find to their coſt 'tis more than *Imaginative*. And God knows this *aſpiring humour* has been no leſs fatally active in *Eccleſiaſtick* than in *Civil* affairs; nor has the Church ever been in more danger of *Anarchy* than by *thoſe* who moſt impatiently coveted a ſhare in its government; for where this ſpirit of ambition is the Impellent, it does like the *Demoniack* in the Goſpel, burſt aſunder all *fetters* and *chains*, violates the unity both of doctrine and diſcipline, nor is any attempt too bold for men thus animated: They who long to be in authority think the *door* opens not quick enough for their entry, and impatient of ſo tedious an expectation, chuſe rather to make breaches in the *walls* (nay ſometimes to undermine the *foundation*) than to want an *acceſs* to

their Deſires. Neither is there any thing ſo ſacred, which upon this occaſion they cannot proſtitute; when *Diotrephes*, 3 *Joh.* 9. ſeeks preheminence, the Dictates even of an *Apoſtle* ſhall be rejected, and even the divinity of *Chriſt*, *God bleſſed for ever*, be trampled on, when *Arius* wants a foot-ſtool to climb up to his affected greatneſs. In a word, if we Examine the occurrencies of all ages, we ſhall find that either the eagerneſs of *acquiring*, or the Revenge of *miſſing dignities*, have been the great *inſtigators* of Eccleſiaſtick Feuds; and ſure our *Modern* ſtories, are not likely to fall ſhort of the *Ancient*, in examples of this kind. And as Pride makes *ſome* thus paſſionately deſirous of rule, ſo it makes *others* as impatient of being ruled, and even thoſe who cannot hope to arrive to *give* Laws, will not endure to *be under* thoſe already eſtabliſhed. That *this* is indeed the Chriſtian *liberty* for which many in our days have ſo unchriſtianly contended, is too apparent, the *fundamental quarrel* has been againſt *ſubjection*: Yet to countenance and abet that, whole *Armies* of frivolous cavils have been rais'd, and the *Church* attacqued in every its remoteſt concern, and though there be nothing farther from that unity of mind, to which the ſimile was firſt affixt, yet in a perverſe ſenſe it imitates the *Ointment* of *Aaron* in *deſcending from the head to the ſkirts of the cloathing*: not only the *ſupreme* and *more eminent parts*, but the moſt *ſlight extrinſick* and *inferior relatives* to Religion being aſperſt and depraved; and the moſt *innocent* Circumſtances

cumſtances of Civil or Natural actions made *criminal*, when applied to Divine things. A ſtrange *ineffective power*, which theſe men have convey'd into Gods ſervice, that it muſt thus pollute every thing that approaches it. That the *place* where his Honor dwells, muſt become a *Peſthouſe*, and diffuſe *contagion* to all in it: (I wiſh by the way their *Sacrileage* had not been too valiant in deſpiſing the Danger of thoſe *infected utenſils*, which may perhaps ſadly verifie the reproach, and prove *treacherous prizes*) And when mens *zeal* operates thus unkindly, when the pretence of *internal ſanctity* devours all *outward decency*, and *God* is to be honored and exalted by thoſe ways, whereby *men* would think themſelves affronted, and vilified; we have too great reaſon to think ſuch a zeal as little according to *godlineſs* as *knowledge*, and that it is not ſo much the *tenderneſs* of their Conſciences, no nor generally the *weakneſs* of their Brains, but the *Iron ſinew* in their Necks, which makes them at once ſo ſcrupulous, and ſo clamorous; for though the *former* might be ſuppos'd owing to Error, the *later* can ſurely proceed from nothing but Pride. Several other inſtances might be given to ſhew how that pernicious temper has contributed to the riſe and firſt being of our diviſions; and having thus given them birth, it does not like the *Oſtrich* abandon its Brood, but has as great an influence in the *cheriſhing* and *maintaining*, as it had in *creating* them. Of this there need no other proof than the meer *nature* of Pride, which as it

averts nothing more than *ſelf-condemnation*; ſo upon pain of that appearance, 'tis irreverſibly engag'd in the purſuit of its firſt undertakings, any *deſiſting* being interpretatively a *confeſſion* either of an Error or a Defeat, both which are inſupportable to an aſſuming temper: So that beſides the *original incentives* forementioned, it has this of *diſdain* ſuperadded to actuate its motions. And accordingly we find they are at this rebound the more violent, not only the *ſucceſs*, but the *credit* of the firſt enterprize depending upon a vigorous proſecution: So that *Catalines* Maxim of *Villany* ſeems to have been adopted into ſome mens *divinity*, and they think paſt Crimes are only to be ſecur'd by more and greater. Nor is it only *hope* to atchieve their *deſign*, or hide their *ſhame* which thus animates them, *deſpair* will do it to a yet higher degree. Our Concupiſcible and Iraſcible appetites dwell not ſo remote, but they are ready reſerves to one another, and what was *deſire* in the purſuit, becomes *anger* and *revenge* in the diſappointment; and ſure we need not be told the wild effects of thoſe paſſions. How many men have in a *furious deſpair* over-acted even their own *projects*, and have made it a malicious conſolation in their ruine, to get it attended with that of the publick? As *Herod*, who to ſecure a *lamentation* at his death, commanded a *Maſſacre* ſhould accompany it, or (to give a more Eccleſiaſtical inſtance) like *Aerius*, who ſought the aboliſhing of that order in the Church, whereof himſelf could not partake. I wiſh no mans *Conſcience* in

our

our days were qualified to ſuggeſt a freſher example. But whileſt 'tis ſo many ways the *intereſt* of Pride to abet our *contentions*, we cannot think it ſo ſluggiſh or uninduſtrious an *agent*, as not to find out *expedients* for its purpoſe. I ſhall not attempt to give a particular of its *inſtruments*, when I have ſaid that *Schiſm* is one of them, I need not add more, ſince that alone ſerves both to *complete* and *perpetuate* the Miſchief of all our ſpeculative diſſentions. How cloſe a Band of concord the *communicating in holy duties* is, we may learn by *Jeroboam*, who ſeems ſo well to have underſtood its unitive efficacy, that he durſt not truſt the newly divided *Tribes* in a joynt reſort to the Temple; and therefore leſt the *rupture* he had made in the State ſhould cloſe again, he thinks it neceſſary to make *another* in the Church, and ſecure his defection from his *Prince*, by that from his *God*. But we need not borrow a *teſtimony* from that his impious *Policy*, we have a more *Authentick atteſtation* from the holy *Pſalmiſt*, who when he would deſcribe the *greateſt entireneſs*, Exemplifies it by the *walking to the houſe of God as friends*, *Pſal.* 55. 14. And the *Apoſtle* goes yet higher, and from our common *participation* of the Euchariſt, infers not only our *union*, but our *incorporation*. *We being many are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread*, 1 *Cor.* 10. 17. And then ſure we may on the contrary conclude, that our *ſeparation* muſt have the quite diſtant effects; alienate our *affections*, and by that means ſtill more eſtrange our *Judgments*.

For

For beſides that 'tis natural to men to think they can never run far enough from that they begin to loath, they are in their own defence to amplifie the *differences*, that they may acquit themſelves from the *ſcandal* of a cauſeleſs ſeparation; and this God knows is the uſual Method among us, when we have broken *communion*, our only ſtudy is not how to *repair*, but *juſtifie* it. The adverſaries *Tenets* are rigorouſly ſcanned, new *Charges* exhibited, and the *Schiſm* defended upon thoſe later diſcoveries, which were no motives to the making it. And then ſure no man can doubt but this is a *proper way*, both to *multiply and Eternize diſputes*; and 'tis abundantly manifeſt, that vanity and elation of mind is the cauſe that Men thus prefer a *miſtaken reputation*, before their own *innocence*, or the Churches *peace*. Indeed if we throughly conſider it, we ſhall find *Pride* is one of the fatalleſt inſtruments of Exciſion, the *two-edg'd ſword* by which adverſe parties do mutually cut themſelves from one another. The very *elements* and *conſtitutive parts* of a Schiſmatick, being the *Eſteem of himſelf*, and the *Contempt of others*. *I am not as this Publican was*, we know, the voice of the proud *Phariſee*, whoſe very name ſignifies *ſeparation*, and our modern *Separatiſts* do but Echo the ſame note, when they pronounce all thoſe *Heretical* or *Carnal* from whom they have withdrawn. Or perhaps they derive from a yet more ancient preſident, thoſe of whom the Prophet *Eſay* ſpeaks, *Eſay* 65. 5. which ſay, *Stand by thy ſelf, come not near me, for I am holier than thou*;

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an Insolent kind of language, which the *Cathari* in the *primitive times* did not more exactly transcribe, than many *Sects* of differing denominations have done in *ours*. But 'tis to be remembred, that while the *Pharisee* lookt so fastidiously on the poor *Publican*, he renounc'd communion in prayers much more acceptable than his own; and those *refined Zealots* who fear'd *contagion* from the approach of their more innocent Brethren, could boldly venture on the *pollutions* of the most detestable Idolatries: And God knows the note has too ready an application in both instances. In the mean time 'tis a sad contemplation, that so much of that *zeal* which makes such a glistering in the World, shall when brought to the Touch, be found *adulterate*, that the transcendent *purity* men boast of, should prove but a more sublimated *wickedness*, and their *pretence* to spirituality be verified only in *spiritual pride*. Alas, is not the whole *circuit* of Secular things wide enough to contain this *swelling humor*? Are there not *Pomps* and *Vanities* of the world enough to entertain this one *Lust*, but must this *Moabite* be brought into the *Sanctuary*? Can we not be *elevated* enough unless we *trample upon* all that is holy, and make *Religion* Factor for our *Ambition*? We find some very confidently point out *Antichrist* upon the strength of this one predicted circumstance, that he was to *sit in the Temple of God*. But what need we travel beyond the *Alps* to find out that, which *every where* presents itself? Our Prides does too unhappily answer the description; and though there

there is no inſtance wherein it can ceaſe to be *Antichriſtian*, yet ſurely it is more eminently ſo, when it thus uſurps *Gods ſeat*, and rules in Sacred things. Would God the *pains* and *animoſity* which has been ſpent in diſcovering and reviling *other* Antichriſts, had been diverted to the pulling down of *this*, the labour would have been more effectual even to the immediate end of the Deſigners; for were this Pride *eradicated*, the Foundation of all Spiritual uſurpations were *undermin'd*. But alas, thoſe who exclaim the moſt loudly againſt all *foreign Tyranny* on their Conſciences, do obſequiouſly bow to this *inteſtine Uſurper*, make an entire dedition of themſelves, and ſubmit to the ſevereſt and ignobleſt *vaſſalage*. They have inveſted it with ſo abſolute and ſoveraign a Power, that (as *Samuel* warns the *Iſraelites* of their King, 1 *Sam.* 8.) they are not to call any thing their own, when it is uſeful to its ſervice: All their powers, all their intereſts are devoted to it, and that not only to adorn its *pomp*, but to fight its *battels*. Men quarrel and contend till not only *themſelves*, but even *Chriſtianity* itſelf expire in the conteſt. But if it be indeed certain that every *War* is ſo far unjuſtifiable, as are the *cauſes* of it, 'twill ſurely be a competent prejudice againſt our contentions, that our Pride is ſo much concern'd in them, which is ſo unchriſtian a *motive*, as all the *holy-water* wherewith men have ſprinkled it, can never baptize into a *cleanneſs*; all the *borrowed dreſſes* of Zeal and Sanctity, however they may *diſguiſe*, can never

legitimate

legitimate it. Those Arts of concealment may indeed add a *new guilt*, that of *Hypocrisie*, but can never expiate, no nor extenuate the *old*: And how *Saint-like a form* soever our *Vain-glory* puts on, it does but the more own its derivation from *him*, who can *transform himself into an Angel of light*, whose aspirings have first subverted *himself*, and now go on to propagate both his Crime and Ruine to *us*; nor has he ever manag'd that *design* with more Art or Success, than by thus making our Pride a *partition-wall* to divide us from *one another*, and consequently from *God* too; who being, as our Church styles him, the *author of Peace* and *lover of Concord*, can never joyn himself with the *disturbers of both*, but must necessarily be disobliged by our Dissentions and Schisms.

CHAP. XIV.

A Survey of the Causes of Disputes; Secondly, Curiosity.

IF now we proceed farther in our enquiry we shall find, that another grand *incendiary* of our Disputes is *Curiosity*: A vice which though in some respects it may be reckoned a *species* of the *former*, that of Pride, yet in others it admits a *distinct consideration*. This is that baneful *weed* which the Devil made a shift to steal even into *Paradise*, and which has ever since affected

fected the *richest soils*, the most pregnant and polite Wits; nor did it only eject *man* from thence, but it has improved the *original curse*, and multiplied those *briers* and *thorns* among which he was cast, yea, transplanted them from the *Earth*, where they could only raze the skin, into the *Brain*, where they pierce and torture the intellectual and immortal Part of Man. Nay farther, even that *sweat of his brows*, which was to extirpate them from the *ground*, serves but to water and cherish them in his *mind*; his very *industry* being in this case the extremest *ill-husbandry*, and the more *pains* he takes, the farther he removes himself from all *real advantages* of his toil.

THERE are some parts of *Knowledge* which God has thought fit to seclude from us, to fence them not only as he did the interdicted *Tree*, by Precept and Commination, but with Difficulties and Impossibilities; made it not only our *sin* and danger, but our *Folly* and madness to attempt them. Of this kind are the Mysterious parts of our *Religion*, which he shews us as it were a-far off to exercise our *faith* and *reverence*, but stoops them not to our *sense* and *disquisition*. These he has placed like the *Sun*, where they may influence, not annoy; warm, not scorch us. And would we still permit them to remain at that safe and wholsome *distance*, we should find none but *benigne effects*; but so importunate are the instigations of Curiosity, that no *bounds* will keep us from the *Mount*: We will needs break through into the *thick darkness*, how dreadful soever the

thunders

thunders and *lightnings* are in the way. Like bold *Phaetons* we despise all *benefits* wherewith the Father of light and us can court us; unless we may guide his *Chariot*; and we moralize the *Fable* as well in the tragicalness of the *event*, as the insolence of the *undertaking*; this unhappy Curiosity having not only ruin'd many of the *inquisitors*, but set the whole *world* also in a *conflagration*. Nor is this temerity more *fatal* in its Success, than *impious* in its Foundation: For besides that it is a direct *invasion* of Gods peculiar, and *violation* of his Command, it does evidently imply a *distrust*, either of his Wisdom or his Goodness; supposes him either so *ignorant* of the strength of those faculties himself has made, that he has assigned them unproportionable objects, and so they must have new work cut out for them by our selves; or else presumes his *Eye evil* towards his own Creatures; that as the *Devil* once suggested to our *first Parents*, he fears the rivalry of poor mortals, and by an envious detention of some parts of felicity, like one that had been Bountiful only upon *surprize* and *incogitancy*, illiberally retracts and contradicts his *original design* of making Man completely happy. Nay, indeed this represents him unkind, not only to *us his created Images*, but even to that Eternal and express image of his Person, *the Son of his bosom*, who may well be thought to have been, as despised in *his Eyes*, as he was once in *ours*, *Esay* 53. 3. if he have so cheaply expos'd him for their sakes, to whom he denies any of those *intellectual advantages*, which

difference

difference *them* from *Beaſts*. Thus wickedly curious are we, that rather than converſe with *vulgar ordinary things*, we create *prodigies*, put *new forms* upon him that is *unchangeable*, rob *divinity* of its moſt inſeparable *attribute*, and not only *diſobey* God, but *reproach* him. And then 'tis no wonder if that which affords ſo little *glory* to God, hath no more *good-will* for Men, and that which thus wars with *Heaven*, leave little peace on *Earth*. Indeed if we will be building our *Babels*, and thus aſſault *Omnipotence*, 'tis but juſt we ſhould have our *language confounded*, and that that *knowledge* for which we boldly attempt to rifle Gods cabinet, ſhould like the *Coal* from the Altar, ſerve only to embroil and conſume the *ſacrilegious invaders*. Yet beſides what is owing to divine vengeance in the caſe, the thing has in itſelf a proper, natural efficiency toward it; for when ſo many men are engag'd in a *blind ſearch*, 'tis not imaginable they ſhould all *ſtumble* upon the ſame Notions, and ſuppoſing them to fall upon *variety*, 'tis impoſſible but mens fond overweening of their own conceits and petulant diſdains of others, will improve that *variety* into Oppoſition, and that *oppoſition* into ſet and Solemn Feuds. And God knows, the Church is too effectively acquainted with this *fatal gradation*, and can experimentally atteſt the *unhappy propriety* of this ſort of Curioſity towards the engendring of *diſcord* and *confuſion*.

BUT beſides this *higher* rank of things which God hath ſet ſo much *above* us, there are others

others of an *inferior* sort, as much *below* us, which are concealed from us, not for their *sublimity*, but their *uselessness*; for as God on the one hand remembers that we are but *flesh*, unable to bear the nearer approaches of *divinity*, and so talks with us as once with *Moses* through a cloud: So on the other he forgets not that *he breathed into us the breath of life*, a vital active spirit, whose motions he expects should own the dignity of its *original*, and as it was itself an *emanation* of the Essential Goodness, should aim at only *real* and *solid good*, and not evaporate and exhaust its powers in *mean* and *impertinent pursuits*. And upon this score also, he has found it necessary to hide many things from us, not that they would *dazzle*, but *misemploy* our Eye; not *swallow* up our Understanding, but *divert* our Attention, from what is more important: Of this sort are those many thin *aerial speculations*, the certain knowledge whereof would bring us no real advantage, make us at all the wiser to Salvation; yet such a value does our *inquisitive Nature* set upon every thing for its being *hid*, that as if our Life were bound up with these Secrets, and all our Felicity dwelt in the Shade of these recesses, we pursue this search with indefatigable *industry*, ransack all corners with as great *diligence* as the *Woman* for her lost piece of Silver, *Luke* 15. 8. And as if this were indeed the *treasure* hid in the field, sell *all* that we have, lay out our whole *selves* upon the *purchase*. Indeed he that shall consider what solemn Disquisitions

there are upon the slightest, and inconsiderablest Subjects, with what Advertence and concern Questions of this kind are bandied in the world, must wonder how men can at once be so *serious* and so *trifling*; or that those who can say *so much*, should not once ask themselves to what purpose they say *any thing*. Yet what multitudes of men are there engag'd in such chases as this? When alas, the quarry is not worth half the toil, could it be gotten: but what *Solomon* says of the *sluggard*, *Prov.* 12. 27. that *he roasteth not that which he took in hunting*, is true of the contrary temper, these *over-busie spirits* whose labour is their only reward, they hunt a *shadow*, and chase the *wind*; and when they strein to their utmost speed, there is still the wonted Distance between *them* and their *aims*; all their eager pursuits bring them no acquest; but after they have traverst so much *ground*, traced all the *mazes* that learned Curiosity could contrive to perplex men, and studied to the weariness of the *flesh*, if not to the quenching of the *Spirit* too, they are still in the same *ignorance* from whence they set out, and twere well if they were also in the same *doubtfulness*: But the unhappiness of it is, they acquire a *confidence* without any *true ground* of it; and get such a Knowledge as may *puff up*, but not *edifie*. This was eminently exemplified in the *Gnosticks* of old, whose vain *Chimæras*, and *foolish questions*, as the *Apostle* calls them, *Tit.* 3. 9. past with them for such a *superlative wisdom*, as gave them Insolence to discriminate themselves from

from others by that swelling *Title*, and monopolize the reputation of *Science*, which yet if we will believe the great Doctor of the *Gentiles*, and he too brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel*, the greatest *Rabbi* of the *Jews*, was *science* falsly so called. And God knows, they want not successors in this as well as in other particulars, men are so possest with their own *Phancies* that they take them for *Oracles*, and think they see visions, and are arrived to some Extraordinary *revelations* of Truth, when indeed they do but dream *dreams*, and amuse themselves with the Phantastick *Ideas* of a busie imagination. Yet would they only please themselves in the delusion, the Phrensie were more innocent; but like the prouder sort of *Lunaticks*, they will needs be *Kings* and *Rulers*, impose their wild *conjectures* for *Laws* upon others, and denounce *War* against all that receive them not. And this is that which makes the great combustion, and confusion among us; for while one man Opines one way, another another, and each will obtrude his *opinion* on every body else: 'tis impossible but the *contests* should be sharp and endless; for each man labours under a double Impatience, the *one* of having his own notions rejected, the other of having the quite contrary impos'd on him; and though 'tis true the *vexatiousness* of the Injury ought to allay the *displeasure* at it, yet men so much more consider what they *suffer* than what they *do*, that every one cries out aloud of that hard measure, which him-

ſelf offers without regret. And between *winds* ſo contrary and ſo fierce, tis no wonder if *ſtorms* ariſe; and in ſuch *Tempeſts* has Religion ſo long been toſſed, that it now needs the interpoſition of a divine *Miraculous power*, to keep it from ſinking; for alas, theſe *Skirmiſhes* expire not with the firſt Propugners of the Opinions; they perhaps began as *ſingle Duellers*, but then they ſoon get their troops about them, have their *partiſans* and *abettors*, who not only enhance, but entail the feud to poſterity. And indeed this propagation of Strife, both in theſe *triſling*, and the former more *profound* ſpeculations, is the moſt fatal circumſtance of the whole Caſe: Were it not for this, though we might have *many Errors*, we could have *no Sects*. And if the Church might be ſometimes wounded with the *darts* of ſingle Adverſaries, yet ſhe could not be ſurrounded and beſieg'd with *combinations* and *confederacies*. Some ſtragling Souldiers might prove *renegadoes*, but they would not revolt in *troops* and *legions*. We ſhould not have ſuch numerous Parties, who with the greateſt violation of Chriſtian unity, denominate themſelves, not from the *grand author and finiſher of our Faith*; but from the *firſt brocher of their Idoliz'd opinions*. In the mean time, 'tis a ſad contemplation, that a little *vain curioſity* ſhould weigh ſo much, or the Churches *peace* ſo little with us: that we ſhould ſacrifice the one, to the *ſatisfaction* ſhall I ſay, or rather to the *whetting* and *inflaming* of the other. But 'tis a yet ſadder, that this ſhould chiefly

chiefly be done by those whose *learning* enables, and whose *profession* should devote to the most noble and most profitable Studies; nay have the highest obligations to correct those *exorbitancies* in others, which with such *Art* and *labour* they propagate and teach. How wounding a spectacle is it to see our greatest *Heroes* like *Hercules* at the *Distaffe*, thus degenerously employed, and to find those who were by Christ design'd for *fishers of Men*, thus entertain themselves like *Children*, with *picking up Shells* and *Pebbles* on the shore; and which is yet more, unmanly *wrangling* about them too. Indeed at this rate, 'tis no wonder if they make the *disciples* Complaint, *we have travelled all night and have taken nothing.* This sure is so little the way to win Souls, that he whose business it is to destroy them, can very contentedly refer them to this method; can gladly leave us all our nice and subtle *disquisitions*, upon the very same score that one of the *Gothick* Commanders advised the sparing of the *Italian Schools* and *Libraries*; Let us, says he, leave them their Books, that whilest they amuse themselves with such *follies*, we may subdue them at our *pleasure*. It is the saying of the Wise-man; *there is a wisdom that multiplieth bitterness*; and sure if there be a wisdom acquired by these curious Enquiries, 'tis of this sort, like the Knowledge of Good and Evil attained by our first Parents, which taught them to know the Good only by its *loss*, and the Evil by its *smart*. Indeed our too high, and transcending *speculations*

on the one hand, and our too trivial and unprofitable on the other; are like the *torrid* and *frigid* Zone, the one conſumes us with its *heat*, the other chills, and benumns us with its *cold*; that turns us to *Cinders*, this to *Ice*. Theſe little trifling Notions being too ſlight an exerciſe to keep *heat* in our Chriſtianity, which not only expreſſes but maintains its *life* by ſtrong and vigorous Motions. And therefore between theſe *two intemperate*, God has provided us an *habitable Clime*, I mean that middle rank of divine truths which tend to practice. Here he would have us dwell and converſe, fix our thoughts and ſtudies: Nor need we fear that they are too dry a ſubject for our contemplation. We ſee as deep Speculators, as any now aſſume to be, found it far otherwiſe. *David* could entertain himſelf with the *Meditations of God's Law* (not his hidden Decrees or counſels) *all the Day*, *Pſal.* 119. 97 Nay it ſeems the Matter was ſo *copious* and *redundant*, that it could not be confin'd within that *narrow boundary* of Time, but invaded the *night* alſo; forced him to defaulk from his *reſt*, to beſtow on his *meditations*, *I have thought of thy Name O Lord in the night ſeaſon, and have kept thy Law*, Verſe 55. Neither is it a vain expence of Time, which it thus tempts to, but gives the happieſt improvement; lands at that harbour to which all rational ſtudies tend, gives underſtanding, Verſe. 130. *makes wiſe the ſimple*, *Pſal.* 19. 7. and this alſo in an eminent degree, ſuch as ſet him above his teachers, and his Elders

alſo.

also. *Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine Enemies. I have more understanding than my teachers, for thy testimonies are my study. I am wiser than the aged, because I keep thy commandments, Psal.* 119. 98, 99, 100. These are high and liberal Elogies of this divine study: and if any shall seek to divert an unwelcome inference by saying that *David* spoke them only in pious raptures, that they were the transport of his *zeal*, rather than the estimate of his *judgment*; we must resolve the objector far removed from such religious *excesses*, and under the contrary *defect*: yet the *cause* will so well bear an *appeal*, that he may be trusted to consult farther; let him advise with *Solomon*, whose large desires and possessions too of wisdom, must suppose him no stranger to its nature, and he will tell him the very same, and that not in his *devouter extasies*, but in his most *compos'd sedate temper*, when he solemnly seats himself in his School, reads *Ethicks* to his disciples, and professes his design of giving *subtilty* to the Simple, and to the young man *knowledge* and *discretion*, *Prov.* 1. 4. For if his whole book of *Proverbs* be scanned, the sum of it will be found to be nothing else but an *exhortation* to the study of this practick Wisdom. Nay when his own *understanding* was improved and advanc'd by *experience* also, when he had not only *begg'd*, but *bought* wisdom, after he had given his Curiosity its full unbounded Range, compassed the whole Universe, and exa-

min'd not only in *contemplation*, but by sensitive *experiment*, whatever therein could pretend to be that good for the sons of Men, *Eccl.* 2. 3. we find after all this busie inquest, he gives up his *verdict* in this form, *Eccles.* 12. 13. Let us hear the end of the whole matter, *Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the Whole Duty of Man*: And now methinks so solemn a decision of the wisest of Men, and he too inspir'd by the Omniscient God, may be thought of weight enough to acquiesce in. Yet since there are some who love not to weigh in the balance of the Sanctuary, and that had rather receive Responses from *Delphos* than from between the *Cherubims*: Let such at least hear even the Heathen Oracle attesting *Socrates* to be the wisest man, because he directed his studies to the *moral part* of Learning, which he did to such a degree, as to disparage all those more *Airy speculations*, which better'd not mens Manners, but were only λόγων ψόφους, *a noise and clattering of Words*. And *Pythagoras* his School defines Philosophy, ζωῆς ἀνθρωπίνης κάθαρσιν καὶ τελειότητα, *the cleansing and perfecting of humane life*, which two things are said to be done, first by *Vertue*, whose business it is to remove τὴν ἀμετρίαν τῶν παθῶν, *the inordination of our Passions*: Secondly, by *Truth*, which restores τὸν εἰκόνα Θεοῦ, *the Image, and pourtraicture of God*. And since this is the joynt suffrage both of Religion and Reason, why should those that pretend to either defie both, and vainly consume themselves in unprofitable searches? Why should men wander to seek *beggary* and emptiness,

emptiness, who may with far less labour be *rich* at home? Alas, 'tis not *bare knowledge*, how great or universal soever, that can possess us of *felicity*. Were it possible for us to have a window into *Heaven*, to see all the Divine secrets, yet that might be but like the Rich mans prospect into *Abrahams* bosom, while himself was in the *bottomless pit*. They are not only the *gross* and *illiterate Souls* that must feed those *flames*, the most *Aerial* and *Sublimated* are rather the more proper fuel for an *immaterial Fire*, and the knowledge we carry thither, render us the fitter company for him, who knew every thing but how to keep himself happy. It was at once the Observation and Wonder of *Plutarch*, that whereas God has several *incommunicable properties*, as Power and Immortality, *&c.* these all men aspir'd to, in the mean time neglected that of *Goodness*, wherein he was willing all men should share. And sure there is now cause of the same complaint, we would have Omniscience and all parts of Divinity besides the holiness, yet alas, those without these would prove but fatal acquests, and that approach towards being *Gods*, would only make us the more *Devils*. The only advantagious as well as possible *way* of Assimilation with God is by *purity*, and the *means* of that an Attentive consideration of those *Divine revelations*, which are to regulate our practice; these at once dispence *light* and *warmth*, direct and revive the Soul: And if men would not exhale *vapours* to cloud and darken them, Eclipse the cleerest Truths

Truths by *difficulties* of their own creating, no man could miſs his way to Heaven for want of light, and yet ſo vain are they as to think they oblige the world by involving it in darkneſs, as if their *Miſts* ſhould like that *which Watered the new form'd Earth, Gen.* 2. 6. ſupply the place of the *dew* of Heaven. But certainly to all ſuch in their profuſeſt liberalities, we need make no other Requeſt than *Diogenes* did to *Alexander*, deſire them only that they will not ſtand between *us* and the *Sun*, intercept its rays, and rob us of that which is infinitely better than any thing they can give us. Were this but obtain'd, we ſhould ſoon diſcern the inconſiderableneſs of thoſe things whoſe effects have been ſo ſadly conſiderable to Chriſtendom; thoſe many *Chimæras* which we wrangle and fight about, would in this Sun-ſhine appear but *Motes* that dance in the Air, (though God knows as we manage them, they are the moſt luxurious Revels to the Prince that rules there.) Were but a St. *Pauls* doctrine throughly imbib'd, our Curious Arts, περίεργα γράμματα, *ſuperfluous unconcerning ſtudies*, would as it happened, *Acts* 19. be ſupplanted; and our *devotion* if ſufficiently accended, would as theirs, *burn up* innumerable *books* of this ſort. And ſure as this would be the *greateſt*, ſo it would be the moſt *triumphant Bonfire* Chriſtendom ever ſaw, as being not only an *indication*, but a *means* of the *mighty growth*, and prevailing of the Word of God, which our vain *Curioſities* ſerve only to impede and obſtruct, while they do as mightily advance *diſſentions* & *animoſities* amongſt men. CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

A Survey of the Cauſes of Diſputes; Thirdly, Intereſt.

BUT beſides theſe *two*, there is a *third* Fomenter of diviſions, which either for its activity or ſucceſs muſt not ſubſcribe to either of them, and that is *Intereſt*. This is the great *Idol* to which the world bows: To this we pay our devouteſt homage, give it not only our *knees*, but our *hearts*; and as if the making us rich were a *ſecond* Creation, that could cancel all the obligations of the *firſt*: We ſacrilegiouſly entitle our profit to all the Prerogatives of a Creator, give it an abſolute unlimited dominion over us, allow it to preſcribe us all our meaſures of good and evil; to rule not only our *Reaſon* but our *Paſſions* too, (a Soveraignty, alas, we would never yield to our God) and as if the *giving* us *laws* were not Empire enough, we permit it to impoſe *Religions* alſo; for ſure they that obſerve how great an influence it has in *Church-affairs*, will conclude it governs more than the *ſecular* part of the world. And indeed if we look back, we ſhall find 'tis no *novel uſurpation*, but though void of other Title, has the Preſcription of *many ages*. Divinity has long ſince been made the handmaid of Policy, and Religion's modelled by conveni-

conveniencies of State. The golden *Calves* became venerable *deities*, when they were found apt to ſecure *Jeroboams* Jealouſies: And *Machiavils* policy, that *States ſhould ſerve themſelves of Religion*, was a common practice long before 'twas his Rule. And this Example of Communities has been tranſcrib'd by ſingle Perſons. In the Old Teſtament we find frequent mention of thoſe *mercenary* Prophets, that turn'd the *office* into a *trade*, divin'd for *money*, nay, ſometimes for more contemptible hire, *handfuls of Barley* and *pieces of Bread*: And in the New we ſee the ſame motive of Secular advantage had force enough to turn an *Eccleſiaſtick* into a *Laick*, make *Demas* degrade himſelf, and deſert his Miniſtry, and as it thus ſtopt his mouth from preaching the *Truth*, ſo it open'd thoſe of Others to divulge *Errors*. Such were thoſe deceivers of whom St. *Paul* ſpeaks, *Tit.* 1. 11. *who ſpake things they ought not for filthy lucres ſake*. So when the ſame Apoſtle declaims the moſt earneſtly againſt the *love of money as the root of all evil*, we find he fetches his proof of that Charge, from its having *made men erre from the faith*, 1 *Tim.* 6. 10. And 'tis St. *Peters* prediction, that the moſt damnable Hereſies, even the *denying of the Lord that bought them*, ſhould be introduced by *thoſe*, who through Covetouſneſs ſhould make *merchandize* of their *Proſelytes*, 2. *Pet.* 2. 4. and ſure the *event* atteſts the *preſage* to have concern'd more than the Age immediately ſucceeding, there being none of the ſubſequent which hath not in ſome degree aſſiſted its completion,

pletion; nor have we cauſe to wonder *here-at*, ſince 'tis obvious to diſcern the conjunction and dependence between Covetouſneſs and Hereſie. For the *Itching ears*, the Apoſtle ſpeaks of, being an *Epidemick diſeaſe*, give fair opportunity to every *Mountebank* to try his *Experiments*. When men nauſeat *Old* truths, becauſe they are acquainted with them, and embrace doctrines for the very ſame reaſon, they ſhould reject them, even becauſe they are *New*: When they love no Teachers, but ſuch as thus entertain them, and are bountiful to none but ſuch as they love; there is little doubt, but there will be *Mints* enough ſet on work, when the *Coiners* can thus at once *ſtamp new opinions* for their Diſciples, and *Money* for themſelves: And God knows they are not a *few* of our Diviſions, that have thence taken *birth*. It will be needleſs to ravel far into the Records of Elder times, every mans memory will be able to ſuggeſt to him too many, and too pertinent inſtances. Upon which reflection 'twill be too viſible, that much of ſome mens late pretence to *Godlineſs* was but a real purſuit of *Gain*; and the *new light* ſerv'd to guide them to their *neighbours Coffers*: And probably many of our Diſputes had been ſuperſeded, had not the Authors foreſeen, that though they loſt the Queſtion, they ſhould gain what they more ſought. A few eſſays had diſcover'd how much the *Populacy* were pleas'd with *Novelties*, eſpecially ſuch as at once gratified their *Levity* and their *Pride*, by caſting ill reflections on the things or Perſons to whom they owed

owned a reverence; and the *liberal contributions* ſuch Teachers met with, ſerv'd ſtill to invite more *labourers* into that *work*, where without the uneaſineſs of a long Expectation, their very *ſeed-time* was their *Harveſt*, and by ſowing *Tares*, they immediately reaped *Gold*: And 'tis no wonder if ſuch *quick returns* made them *diligent* at the trade, induſtrious to provide thoſe wares they ſaw they could put off ſo well. And would to God we were ſecure, that *this way* of Traffick were yet at an end, for ſo long as theſe *ſpiritual Merchants* can thus impoſe on their *credulous Chapmen*, make them buy one miſchief with another, and exhauſt their *Eſtates* to endanger their *Souls*, we muſt not hope our *diſſentions* will ever ceaſe, our *flames* ever be extinct, that have ſo much *matter* to feed them, and ſuch *importunate blaſts* to blow them up.

BUT *covetouſneſs* is of too unſatiable a nature to be contented with one way of ſupply, 'tis like the *Sea*, that receives the Tribute of *all Rivers* (though far unlike it in lending any back again) and therefore thoſe who have reſolv'd upon the *thriving ſort* of Piety, have ſeldom embarkt all their *hopes* in one *bottom*, nor ſo depended on the *bounty* of their Proſelytes, as to neglect other *ways of preying* for themſelves. They wanted not providence to foreſee, how uncertain a revenue popular benevolence is: That the ſame giddy and violent *humour*, which had opened their hands *ſo wide*, might by working another way cloſe them *as faſt*; or if their *inclinations* continued, their *abilities*

abilities might fail;(a thing very poſſible to thoſe, who have ſuch ſuckers) or if both theſe remain'd, yet that they were unlikely to grow in proportion to their own appetites, and therefore found it neceſſary to have ſome other reſerve; and beſides, this way of *flattering* their willing *benefactors* out of part, contrived another of *forcing* their unwilling Neighbours out of all their *poſſeſſions*: So making the ſpoils of ſome mens *honeſty* a richer booty than that of others *folly*. Hence *Shiboleths* found out of Covenants and Engagements, to give opportunity of deſtroying a diſſenting brother; by this Art a *fat benefice* became *crime* and *witneſs* too againſt its Incumbent, and he was ſure to be *unorthodox*, that was worth the *plundering*. Thus alas, has the *Altar* of God been attended, or rather invaded by thoſe whoſe very *approach* was a *guilt*, that qualified them rather to lay hold on its *horns*, than pretend to its *ſervice*; for ſure that God, who has declar'd he hates *robbery* for *burnt-offering*, cannot much affect *Robbers* for *Prieſts*. But this is a Theme ſo unpleaſant, I delight not to enlarge on it, and rather wiſh that the memory of it were ſo extinct, that it might remain no where but in the penitential Litanies of the Offenders; my deſign in the preſent reflection is only to make it an evidence how much *covetouſneſs* promotes our *contentions*, which ſure is not more viſible any where than in this inſtance: For where there is a deſign of ſupplanting, that neceſſarily requires another of accuſing; (even *Jezebel* her ſelf projects not to ſeize on *Naboths* Vineyard without

without a precedent *Charge*) to comply with which neceſſity, not only the *lives* and *converſations*, but the *doctrines* and *opinions* of our moſt eminent Divines have been ſtrangely miſrepreſented, and when that proved not *fence* enough to the *reputation* of their Oppreſſors, they have thought fit to change the *Scene*, and to combate thoſe *opinions* in their *true ſhape*, upon which they could not ſo well faſten their *diſguiſe*. I ſhall not here need to ſay with how much, or how little pretext of reaſon they managed thoſe Diſputes: 'Tis enough to my purpoſe that ſuch Diſputes there were, and thoſe founded in the deſire of acquiring ſecular advantages, which ſufficiently atteſts *Intereſt* to be a potent *Abetter* of our quarrels.

BUT God knows that is a truth of which the *world* affords ſo many proofs, that we need not confine our ſelves to this little *Angle* of it, or owe our *convictions* only to our *domeſtick tranſactions*; if we look abroad we ſhall find it too often exemplified. The memorable *diſturbance* given to the Church, as well as State of *Germany* by the *Anabaptiſts*, is a pregnant inſtance; whoſe *new opinion* was but an expedient of inveſting themſelves in *new poſſeſſions*, and their *ſecond Baptiſm* but the Solemnity of eſpouſing, not only the *fleſh*, but the *world* alſo, which they had renounced in the *firſt*.

AND would God they had been the only Set of Men, whoſe *doctrines* were ſubſervient to their *intereſts*; for ſuch tumultuous and *Plebeian* pro-

jects,

jects, though like a *land-floud* they make great ſpoil at the preſent, yet ſoon ſink again. Such avowed and *exceſſive greedineſs* devours *itſelf*, and the *inſtruments* by which it wrought: ſo that the *defeat* of the ſecular Deſign, is commonly the *routing* thoſe Opinions, which were formed for the promoting it. But when the ſame deſire has the advantage of a ſober guidance; when *Avarice* puts on the *Canonical habit*, and twiſts itſelf not only with the *practice* of Men, but the *doctrines* of the Church; when *articles* of Religion ſhall be eſtimated by their *profitableneſs*, and Eccleſiaſticks *diſpute*, as Lay-men *fight for Money*; then alas, the *miſchief* ſeems fatal, the *diſeaſe* ſo fixt and radicated, as at once diſcourages, and mocks the attempts of *cure*.

THAT this is the caſe not only in a *particular* and *private* Church, but that which aſſumes to be the *Univerſal* and *Catholick* is too apparent. The one Poſition of the Popes right to diſpoſe Kingdoms, out-ſtrips all other principles of rapine: this is to drive a *whole-ſale* trade, when all other petty Merchants deal but for *parcels*: which as it is a much *bolder*, ſo is it a more *prejudicial* attempt than the invading of private poſſeſſions, and theſe *Duo gladii*, the double armature of S. *Peter*, a more deſtructive Engin, than the tumultuary weapon ſnatcht up by a *Fanatick*: but ſure S. *Peter's ſword* though once raſhly managed by himſelf, was never deſign'd to arm his *ſucceſſors* to invade Kingdoms: This *property* of it ſeems rather to have been de-

rived from the *Prætorian souldiers*, who insolently assumed the disposing of the Empire, wherein they at the last arrived to that *impudence*, that after the Death of *Pertinax* they made *open port sale* of it, αἰσχρῶς καὶ ἀτιμως, ὥσπερ καὶ τῶν ἰδιωτικῶς καπηλίων, *in a base and sordid manner, as if it had been of common marketable wares*: I cannot say the Court of *Rome* transcribes that indecent owning of the traffick; but it has in other instances so well attested its good managery, that 'tis not very credible, that Crowns and Scepters are conferred *gratis*. And to *this* so advantageous a Doctrine *others* bear proportion: Those of *Purgatory*, *Indulgences*, and *Supererogation*, are ready instances, wherein the *Assertors* themselves seem to be unanimous in nothing but in a joynt reference to profit; for when they come to minute definitions they vary and disagree; satisfie one another, as little as their common *Antagonists*: and therefore in the Council of *Trent* they prudently chose in their decrees to propose the bare *Articles* backt by the Authority of the Church, and *Anathemas* of the Council, as having by precedent *discussions* of the points in their congregations discern'd the small *accord* that was among themselves, when they descended to *particulars*. And indeed the *Opinions* were so various as to the grounds of the Doctrines, that one would wonder how from so differing *premisses*, they should all infer the same *conclusion*; were it not that the *conspiration* of Interest was too potent for the *diversity* of Judgment. And sure 'twas a strange deference

was

was given to it, when in the matter of *Indulgences*, there was (by the Testimony of their own Writers) four *different* Opinions, and yet all *Catholick*: which moderation towards *Speculative* dissenters, compar'd with the great severity against those that opposed its *Practice*, speaks loud enough that the *Orthodoxy* of the point lay wholly in the *Profitableness*; and that *Luther* himself had been no *Heretick*, had he busied himself only in such disquisitions, as impeded not the *gain* of that Doctrine. Nor is this merely surmise and conjecture, for if we consult the *memorials* of those transactions, we shall find *this* was the thing that most alarm'd *Rome*, put that Court in almost as great a *commotion*, as the *birth* of Christ did *Herods*: and accordingly in their private consults, the closer *cabals* of the Colledge; the *securing* this part of their invaded treasure was the grand *deliberation*, upon which account it was, that when *Adrian* shewed some Inclination to the reforming abuses both in this and other instances, one of his *Cardinals* who better knew the entrigues of affairs, admonisht him against that unskilful piece of *Ingenuity*, not only from the Example of his *Predecessors*, who were resolute never to confess Faults by *mending* them, but by *representing* to him, "That no *reformation* "could be made, which would not notably di- "minish the *rents* of the Church, which having "four foundations, the one *Temporal*, the other "three *Spiritual*, Indulgences, Dispensations, "and Collations of Benefices; no one of them

"could be ſtopped but that one quarter of the "revenues would be cut off. What a reſemblance this advice carries to the oration of *Demetrius* to his fellow crafts-men, *Acts* 19. 25. I need not ſtand to demonſtrate, but while ſuch conſiderations as this, bear ſway in Church matters, where *Profit* ſhall be the *Touch-ſtone* both for faith and manners, we are not to wonder if no *gainful Tenet* be depoſited; or *Peace* bought with that which in moſt mens eſteem is of far more value.

AND this is it which ominates ſadly as to our diviſions with the *Romaniſts*, were our *differences* merely the product of Heat and Paſſion, they would like the *ſmaller clefts* in the ground, want nothing but a *cooler ſeaſon* to cement and cloſe them: but when they are thus form'd into an *intereſt*, become the Deſign not of *ſingle perſons* or *ages*, but of *corporations* and *ſucceſſions*; the Breach ſeems like the *ſciſſures* and *ruptures* of an Earthquake, and threatens to ſwallow all that attempt to cloſe it, and reſerves its cure only for omnipotence. Indeed till *ſpiritual* and *ſecular* Concerns be reduced into their proper ranks, which are now mixt and confounded, the better to diſguiſe the prepoſterous ſubordination of the nobler to the inferior; till we have forgotten the unhappy *Chymiſtry* of turning *all*, even *Religion* itſelf *into Gold*, we muſt never hope to get out of the *Furnace*; our *flames* will ſtill grow fiercer, and with this unnatural *effect* to conſume not the *Droſs*, but the purer *Metal*. In

a word, till men can ſever themſelves from their *Avarice* and mean purſuits of gain, they will never ceaſe to ſeparate from their *brethren*. For as the moſt *ſovereign Balſoms* cannot cure a hurt while the *arrow* remains in the fleſh: ſo neither can the moſt *pacifick Remedies* at all avail, ſo long as the ſame *worldly Aims*, which made the wound, ſtill ſtick in it.

BUT in the mean time 'tis a *Melancholick* conſideration that Chriſtianity ſhould be by its Profeſſors thus unworthily proſtituted; that the many various and oppoſite Religions, for which we ſeverally pretend ſo much zeal, ſhould be but divers ways to the ſame irreligious End; wherein our *Elders* ſeem to reſemble thoſe in the Story of *Suſanna*, who when they meant to *part* with each other, yet did unawares meet by the impulſe of the ſame Luſt. We find it moved the *patience* even of the *Lamb of God*, to ſee his Fathers *houſe* made a houſe of *merchandize*, though the Traffick was for the furniſhing of Sacrifices: with what abhorrence muſt we think does he now behold thoſe, who drive ſo much a worſe trade in it: who ſell not *accommodations* for worſhip, but the *worſhip* itſelf to accommodate their *intereſts*, and do not only make Gain *in* the Temple, but *of* it. A thing the ſacrilegious Rapine of our days has made literally true, where beſides the *revenues*, the very *fabrick* and *materials* of Churches, have been *marketable ware*: *Judas*'s good husbandry has been taken up, and *ad quid Perditio hæc?* put as the *common Motto*

upon every thing that could be ſold for *more*, nay ſometimes for *leſs* than *Three hundred pence*. And as *Dionyſius* took away the golden beard from *Æſculapius*, to rectifie the indecency of the Sons having a beard when the Father had none: and *Julian* robb'd the Chriſtian altars with this *impious Sarcaſm*, ἐν ξυλίνοις σκεύεσιν ὑπηρετεῖται ὁ Μαρίας υἱός: that *'twas unfit the Son of Mary ſhould be ſerv'd in Plate.* So do men now a-days make themſelves *regulators* of holy things, correct the *indecorums* of the Sanctuary, that they may rifle its *treaſures*. Thus do we ſee the Apoſtles affirmation ſadly verified, that *thoſe who will be rich fall into Temptation, and a ſnare*, 1 *Tim.* 6. 9. Such is the greedineſs of a *covetous appetite*, that it ſwallows indiſcriminately whatever looks like *prize*, and rather than it want its prey, God *Himſelf* ſhall be *robb'd*. Nay, 'twere to be wiſht in this inſtance, that That were all; but alas, he is *mock't* too, uſed not only *unjuſtly*, but *contumeliouſly*; we thus make him a property to our ſordid deſigns, and when he has profeſt that he will not be ſerv'd together with *Mammon*, we attempt that which is yet far more blaſphemous, and make him pay ſervice to him with whom he diſdains to ſhare it when paid by others.

NEITHER is Covetouſneſs the only *Vice* that ſerves its intereſt upon Religion: but as 'tis made a *factor* for that, ſo is it a *cloak* and *diſguiſe* for many other. Of this the Catalogues of primitive *Hereticks* give ſufficient witneſs; divers whereof as the *Nicolaitans*, *Cerinthians*, *Carpocratians*,

tians, and *Gnoſticks* ſeem to have conſtituted diſtinct ſects in *Chriſtianity*, only that they might introduce the moſt beſtial parts of *Heatheniſm*, and pretended an aſſociation in *Religion*, when indeed it was in *luſt*. How far ſome of our modern Sects reſemble them in this Particular, I will not undertake to pronounce: though there want not thoſe who make *ſevere*, and not *improbable* Conjectures concerning it. But whether that be the main deſign or no; 'tis certain both that wickedneſs, and many other find great ſhelter among them. He that brings *reſolution* to uphold a Faction ſhall not miſs of *Entertainment*, how many or how great vices ſoever he brings with it; and *he* that is of a *godly party*, ſhall in ſpight of the loudeſt Guilts be a *godly man*. So *meritorious* a thing is it in ſome mens account to be *factious*, that *it covers the multitude of ſins*: hence it is that *Criminals* ſo frequently fly to new Churches for *Sanctuary*: and 'twill ſtill be the concern of ſuch to have ſo creditable a *Refuge*; and therefore we are not to wonder if *this* Intereſt combine with the *former* in promoting our Diſſentions.

BUT alas, as it advances *thoſe*, ſo does it our *guilt* too, that have more than one vile End to which we accommodate our Piety: and ſtill implies the greater *affront* to our God, by how many the more and baſer *intereſts* we ſhroud under his Patronage. Alas, is it not enough, as *Job* ſpeaks, *to hide our iniquities in our own boſoms*, but muſt we wrap them in the *Veil* of the *Sanctuary*?

We read that *Goats* once lent a *covering* for the Tabernacle; but here by an impious Inversion, the *Tabernacle* must lend a *covering* to the Goats: The most *bestial appetites* be both concealed and preserv'd under the *Shadow* of Religion. *Plutarch* tells us that when *Marcellus* would have consecrated a *Temple* joyntly to Honour and Vertue, the *Priests* resisted it, saying, *Two Gods dwelt not in one Church*: and if their *vain deities* exacted such a solemnity of Respect, and would not be Inmates to *one another*, can we think the *true God* will be content to be made so to all our *vilest lusts*? This is sure the highest Contumely to the divine Majesty; and never could the *abomination of desolation* more properly be said to stand in the *holy place* than in *this sense*: for as the *natures* of these Guilts are fitly expresst by *abomination*, so is the *effect* of them by *desolation*; they having brought the most *fatal mischiefs* on the Church.

AND now would God all that are concern'd in this guilt, would soberly ponder the weight of it. There are *two things* of which God has expresst himself peculiarly Tender, his *honour* and his *Church*; this is the invading him in both; the exposing the *one* to Reproach and Contempt, and the *other* to Ruine and Destruction; and doubtless were there nothing of the *former*, this *later* alone must be sadly accounted for. It remains yet a Character of infamy upon *Achan*, that he troubled *Israel* to enrich himself: and on *Balaam* that *he not only loved the wages of iniquity*, but

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enſnared the people in uncleanneſs: and ſure the ſame with many aggravations belongs to thoſe, who by the like unworthy practice, have not only rendred the Church a prey to *foreigners*, but made it ſo to *itſelf*; engag'd one part of it againſt another, till the whole is ſo waſted, that our *Religion* ſeems now nearer extinction, than our *quarrels* about it.

CHAP. XVI.

A Survey of the Cauſes of Diſputes; Fourthly, Paſſion.

A FOURTH grand contributer to our diſſentions is *Paſſion*, which being by God and nature placed in a ſubſerviency to reaſon, when it quits its *proper ſtation* and aſſumes *empire*, it muſt needs diſorder and ſubvert not only the State of the *Mind*, but of *every thing* upon which it has an Influence. I ſhall not here attempt any *Philoſophical* diſcourſe either of their *nature* or *number*; all that concerns the preſent enquiry falls under one of theſe two, our *love*, or our *hate*; and is either Kindneſs and Prepoſſeſſion, or Spight and Prejudice: For the *firſt* of theſe 'tis a thing which *common experience* atteſts to be a moſt forcible corrupter of the underſtanding, which being by native right deſign'd a *Judge*, is by this interrupted in its

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office, not permitted to make thoſe impartial Enquiries, on which a right *ſentence* ſhould be founded: But (as it fares ſometimes with *Magiſtrates* in Popular inſurrections) forced to give countenance to its own *violation*, to own not its proper native dictates, but ſuch as are preſented to it, by the prejudicate Phancy. And as it thus lays reſtraint upon the *ſuperior* part of the Mind, keeps the underſtanding in fetters, ſo (to complete the inverſion) it takes off all ties from the *inferior*: Gives not only *licence*, but *incitation* to the other Paſſions to take their freeſt range, to act with the utmoſt impetuoſity. And ſure there can nothing more be requir'd, to render it a moſt apt *inſtrument* of Tumult and Confuſion. For when every *opinion* that is taken up, ſhall inſtead of *reaſon* and *argument*, arm itſelf with *heat* and *violence*, there can be no end of contending. And the truth of this is, God knows, too ſadly diſcernible in our *Church-controverſies*, which derive a great deal of their *warmth* and *bitterneſs* from this Fountain.

OF this prepoſſeſſion there are two Sorts, the one relating to *Doctrine*, the other to *Perſons*; by the firſt I mean not a ſober conſtancy to thoſe principles which being firſt imbibed by *education*, are afterwards retain'd upon *Judgment*, but an eager *tenacity* of Opinions, not ſo much upon *Truth* or *Evidence*, as upon a confus'd irrational *kindneſs*; a *Platonick love* of ſome Doctrines merely for themſelves, and then making them the *ſtandards*, by which all others are to be meaſured:

meaſured: And this kind of Prepoſſeſſion is no Stranger in the world, there being multitudes of men, who aſſert opinions with all imaginable vehemence, who can give no better ground of it, but becauſe they like them: And as the wiſer ſort *chuſe* a Tenet, becauſe 'tis *right*, ſo theſe conclude 'tis *right*, becauſe they have *choſen* it. And having thus enamour'd themſelves of their *Helena*, they expect all ſhould adore, nor can he ſcape the note of Profaneneſs that refuſes. By this abſurd partiality it is, that ſome *doctrines*, which would themſelves ill abide the *Teſt*, are become the *Touch-ſtone* both of Doctrines and Men, and no Opinion or Perſon ſanctified which bears not this impreſs. I need not ſtand to give inſtances, either of the *Doctrines* or the unhappy *influence* this eſpouſing of them has had on our diſſentions; but indeed this kind of *Prepoſſeſſion* is oftentimes the *conſequent* of another; and this great *veneration* of ſome Opinions is founded in the *reverence* of their Authors. Men take up a confidence of the *learning* or *ſanctity* of a Perſon, and then all his *notions* are received implicitly, ſtrictly embraced, but not ſo much as ſlightly examin'd; and this *admiration* of mens Perſons, has in all ages been of huge *miſchief* to the Church, has nurſt up *private* Phancies into ſolemn *publick* Errors, and given an unhappy perpetuity to many *Heterodox opinions*, which would elſe have expired with their *firſt Propugners*. This ſeems to have been foreſeen by St. *Paul*, when he ſo earneſtly exhorts the *Corinthians* againſt the aſcribing

ing their *Faith* to their several respective *Teachers*: But sure I am, 'twas sadly experimented by the *succeeding Christians*, who owed many of their *divisions* to it. A pregnant instance hereof was the *Millennium*, which in spight of its improbability prevail'd *long*, and almost *universally* against the *Truth* upon the strength of *Authority*. *Papias* a holy man and Scholar of S. *John*, having delivered it, the *esteem* of his Person canoniz'd his *mistake*, and men chose rather to admit a *doctrine*, whose unagreeableness to the Gospel-Oeconomy rendred it suspicious, than think an *Apostolick man* could seduce them. And the force of this is yet more considerable, when 'tis remembred that it found *Proselytes*, not only among the *Vulgar*, who are commonly flexible to any new Impression, but among those of a *higher rank*, men that were *lights* in their generation: *Justin Martyr* and *Irenæus* having own'd the *Opinion*, and intimated it to have been received by many others no less *Orthodox*; and if such a seduction could prevail, so early in those purer times, before mens interests or spleen were adopted into their Religion, and begot voluntary errors, if I say the *mere reputation* of a Teacher was then singly so operative; we cannot wonder at its efficacy in conjunction with those *auxiliaries*, which worser times have brought in. What concurrence of those there was in the several *Heresies*, which after infested the *Church*, I shall not now examine, but 'tis visible that many of them grew considerable, chiefly from the *fame* of their Authors; thus *Tatianus* upon

on the credit of being *Juſtin Martyr*'s diſciple, had an advantage to diſſeminate his errors, and not only his, but thoſe of *Origen*, *Apollinaris* and *Novatus*, gain'd abettors from the *reputed Orthodoxy* of the Perſons that propos'd them, who having aſſerted the Faith in *ſome* points, were qualified the more proſperouſly to oppoſe it in *others*.

NOR has it been only the miſhap of elder times to have felt the miſchiefs of ſuch prepoſſeſſion; the *diſeaſe* has ſtill advanced, and every day improved in worſe *effect*, by how much men have more degenerated from *primitive integrity*; ſo that the *eaſie Proſelyte* is now in danger, not only from the *blindneſs*, but the *treachery* of his guide, and is often led out of the *common road*, as *thieves* draw paſſengers into *by-ways* for the better opportunity of robbing them: But 'tis not my preſent buſineſs to ſend *Hue and cry* after them, to examine what the intentions of thoſe *leaders* are, who miſguide their tractable admiring *followers*; 'tis enough for my purpoſe to obſerve, that thoſe who ſo deliver up themſelves in a blind aſſent to the dictates of any man, are in his power to be abuſed by him if he pleaſes: I ſhall leave it to others, to eſtimate the *probability* that they ſhall not be actually ſo: But certainly this may be ſaid, that theſe *later* ages have beyond all the *former* given Opportunities of ſeducing to any that will uſe them. The one eſtabliſht Doctrine of *infallibility* among the *Romaniſts* is eminent for its propriety that way, while under pretence of *ſubmiſſion* to ſomething they call *Infallible*, 'tis evident that the

the *faith* of the ignorant Vulgar reſolves itſelf into that which they acknowledge moſt *fallible*; the Doctrine of their immediate Teachers. But indeed take it at the beſt, ſuch a *perſwaſion* is not only an *error* in itſelf, and an apt *foundation* for innumerable others, but it neceſſarily renders them incorrigible; the leaſt retraction of a *miſtake* being ſo inconſiſtent with the claim of *infallibility*, that while they retain the *one*, they muſt never attempt the *other*, nor can they ceaſe to Erre, till they confeſs it poſſible they may do ſo. How much more than poſſible that has been, the many Innovations of that Church ſufficiently witneſs; and conſequently the danger of preſuming upon the unerrableneſs of a guide. But would all that *upbraid* it there, were themſelves *ſecure* from it, and that many did not in their practice tranſcribe that *decried doctrine*, and that too with the improvement of worſe *circumſtances*. I muſt call them *worſe*, by how much the *probabilities* of Erring are *greater* under the extemporary conduct of a *Private perſon*, than the fixt rules of a *community*, and by how much again the voluntary enſlaving my ſelf is more excuſeleſs, than that which the principles of my Profeſſion, and conſequently a ſeeming obligation of Conſcience expoſes me to. And as to the matter of Fact, I think 'tis evident enough, that the *admiration* of mens Perſons is a *ſpreading diſeaſe* that has overrun Chriſtendom, and though a great part of it inveigh againſt *implicite faith*, yet if it be throughly ſcanned, 'twill appear 'tis rather the *object* than

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the *act* we differ about. He that vehemently oppoſes that homage to the *Conclave*, will yet tamely pay it to a *Claſſis*: and he that refuſes it there, yields it to the Votes of a *Congregational Church*; or if he hold out againſt that too, yet chuſes to himſelf ſome *private Teacher* on which to caſt it: Like *Micah*, *Judg.* 16. *Makes him a Teraphim and a Prieſt too, for his private uſe*; and then confidently conſults his *Oracle*, and has nothing to do but believe its *reſponſes*. Nay, that which makes the matter yet more ſadly ridiculous, is that the very Oppoſition to *one* Uſurpation makes them deliver themſelves up to *another*. How many, when they have heard a *Preacher* rail fiercely at the *Pope*, have preſently made him *theirs*, and ſuppoſing that Zeal an *indication of a ſafe guide*, have given him as *abſolute a rule* of their Conſciences, as that he exclaim'd againſt (perhaps Envied) elſewhere: And the like inſtances might be given among our other diſſenting parties. And this has taught ſome Seducers a lucky artifice, made them obſerve to what opinions their Proſelytes had the greateſt averſion, and by complying with their *anger* ſo ſteal away their *love*, that they might after lead them to what they *pleas'd*, yea, perhaps to that which they ſo much *deteſted*: For there want not examples of ſome, who have by back ways been brought to thoſe Opinions, which at firſt they moſt defied. What have been the *attempts* or *ſucceſs* of the Emiſſaries of *Rome* this way, I ſhall not pronounce, though ſome (not improbably) ſpeak them *great*.

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FROM this blind and paſſionate *eſteem* of ſeveral Teachers have flowed many *pernicious conſequents*, particularly thoſe diſtinct Appellations, which form *differences* into *Sects*, many of which expreſly own *this original*, by bearing the names of their *firſt Authors*. I might here put them in mind, that they are *illegitimate perſons*, whom our Law directs to write with an *alias*, and ask them, *whether the Church from their ſuperinduced name, has not cauſe ſo to repute them.* But I am ſure I may with the utmoſt ſeriouſneſs ſay, that this *practice* is to the great *violation* of Chriſtian unity, and *reproach* of Chriſtian profeſſion, which ſeems to be abandon'd and diſown'd by us, who inſtead of denominating our ſelves from *the Author and finiſher of our Faith*, find out *new Patrons*, as if we were aſham'd of our *firſt Relation*. Alas, how is the title of *Chriſtian*, which was ſo *glorious* to the *Primitive owners*, that they gladly bought the occaſion of boaſting it with Torments and Death, become ſo *deſpicable* to *us*, that every the obſcureſt name is courted to ſupplant it. Have any of our *Idolized readers* bought their Intereſt in us ſo dear as *Chriſt* has done, why then are we rather ambitious to be accounted their *dependants* than *his?* 'Tis the *Apoſtles* own argument, 1 *Cor.* 1.13. when he refutes their factious entituling themſelves to *Paul* and *Apollo*, &c. by asking them if *Paul* were crucified for them: And indeed he there ſays ſo much upon this point, that I need only refer the Reader thither to learn, either the *unreaſonableneſs* of this Schiſmatical zeal for

for our several Teachers, or the *inevitable contentions* and *animosities* which spring from it; only let me observe, that every of his Arguments are more pressing upon *us*, than on the *Corinthians*; those taken from the unreasonableness sure are, by how much the *names* we so adore are less venerable than those of *Paul* and *Cephas* or *Apollo*, and those from the consequencies are so also. For those Teachers were industrious to *prevent*, whereas ours commonly are no less busie to *promote contentions* on their behalf, and so we are more ascertain'd never to want them.

BUT besides this *kinder* prepossession towards some mens persons, there is another of a different nature, a *sinister* one. I mean *prejudice* and *disgust*; and *this* has done no less harm in Ecclesiastical affairs than the *former*. Men take up *piques* and *displeasures* at others, and then every *opinion* of the disliked person must partake of his *fate*, and be engaged in the *quarrel*: Nor will those that are enemies ever allow one another the honour of being in the right: Nay, some have been so perversly *malicious*, that they have given up their *understandings* to their *spleen*, forsaken an Opinion themselves approved, only that they might find matter of contest with one they maligned. A memorable instance of this *Socrates* gives in his *Eccl. Hist.* in *Theophilus* Bishop of *Alexandria*, who having formerly attested the Orthodox belief, that God was incorporeal; yet upon a sudden indignation against *Dioscorus* & his brethren, who maintain'd the Tenet, he embraced the con-

trary Heresie of the *Anthropomorphites*, that so under the Colour of a difference in *faith*, he might the more advantageously pursue his *malice*; & the Effects of it were very Tragical, not only to *private persons* in Tumult and Bloud-shed, but to the *Church* by reviving that Error, which was before near expiring, and might as *Socrates* affirms, have lain in the dust, had it not been thus awaken'd. And indeed in Church-story scarce any thing occurs more frequently than examples of those, who upon private grudges have either begun or fomented Heresies and Schisms. Thus *Marcion* being denied the Communion of the *Roman* Church, having before by a *scandalous crime* been cut off from his own, he reveng'd himself by publishing his *detestable doctrine*: In like manner *Miletius* upon a displeasure at *Peter* Bishop of *Alexandria*, first separated from the *Church*, and after took part with the *Arians*: So also *Lucifer* incensed at *Eusebius* for not approving of his Electing *Paulus* to the See of *Antioch*, broke Communion, and gave both rise and denomination to a new *Sect*. The like is said of *Apollinarius*, that he was excited to the broaching his *Heresie* by his impatience of the Excommunication inflicted on him and his Father, by *Theodotus* Bishop of *Laodicea*; and several others might be given to the same purpose, out of the Records of those first Ages.

AND certainly the World seems not to have so much improved in *meekness* since, as that we should think the same *principle* is not still as *active*;

active; and if the Task were not more envious than hard, many recent instances might be given to Parallel the former, especially of such as having justly smarted *under* the stroke of *Ecclesiastical discipline*, have sought to revenge themselves both *on it* and *the inflicters*, by Factions and Tumults; so making the *publick* at once cloak the infamy, and bear the charge of their *particular* rancors. But this is a Subject neither grateful nor necessary to be more distinctly spoken to. One may however in the general say, that where these private Animosities are any thing *violent*, they usually beat down all Consideration of *publick good*. *Historians* observe of *Themistocles*, that he always thwarted the Counsels of *Aristides*, not that he thought it the Interest of the *Commonwealth*, but *his own*, to keep down the growing reputation of his Competitor: And I fear that envious artifice has been too often transcrib'd, as well in *Ecclesiastick*, as in *Civil* Transactions: No *detriment* is thought so formidable to a malicious mind as the *prosperity* of his Adversary; and publick Ruptures shall still be allowed to widen, till they swallow up the whole, rather than he will close with his Antagonist. The History of the *Scottish Church* gives an apposite Example of this in a *ruling Presbyter*, who being by King *James* advis'd with about the readmitting Marques *Huntley*, and prest with the present exigencies of Church and State, which requir'd it, gave his *final answer* in these terms. *Well Sir, I see you resolve to take* Huntley *in favour, if you do, I will op-*

pose it, chuse whether you will lose him or me, for both you cannot have. Some may think the greatest propriety of this instance lies to shew the *insolence* of that Tribe towards *Majesty*; but however 'tis not impertinent to the matter in hand also; and shews how light the greatest *publick concerns* are, when *malice* is the counterpoize: And indeed the *Naturalists* experiment, that *flame* will not mingle with *flame*, never justifies itself better than when applied to minds thus accended, which however they may *meet* in mutual flashes, can never *unite* and *incorporate*: The sadness of it is, that they should only conspire to *common vastation*, and make the Church itself a *burnt offering*.

THUS fatal have our several sorts of prepossessions been to our Religion, for as if that were the *common Enemy*, our most distant contrary Affections, our *love* and our *hate* equally annoy it; those brutish parts of us our *Passions*, which like the *beasts* under the Law, were never to be brought into the *Temple*, but for *sacrifice*, are *now* found there upon a far differing account, not to be *slain*, but *ador'd*; like the *Ægyptian Isis* and *Osyris*, enshrin'd to receive our *Devotions*, for that the Zeal we pretend elsewhere is really paid to them, is alas, too manifest.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

A Survey of the Causes of Disputes; Fifthly, Zeal.

TO those several causes of our distractions we may add another, which though in its *original* it may seem more *innocent*, yet is in its *consequents* no less *pernicious*, and that is a *mistaken Zeal*, which as it is *fire* to all about it, so is it *wind* to itself, fans and irritates its own *flames*, and by a confidence that it does *well*, gathers still fresh vigour to do *more*. How great the force of such an Erroneous perswasion is, we may collect from our Saviours premonition to his Disciples, when he tells them, that *those who kill'd them should think they did God service*; and if *Murder*, and that of *Apostles* too, could by the *Magick* of blind Zeal be so transform'd, we must not wonder to find other *Crimes* so too. And what *Christ* thus foretold was after eminently exemplified in St. *Paul*, whom the Holy Writ represents under all the Phrases that may denote a virulent *persecutor*, as breathing out *threatnings* and *slaughter*, making havock of the Church, and in his own words, *Persecuting that way unto the Death*, and being exceedingly mad against them; and all this he did being Zealous towards God, and out of a *perswasion* that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of *Jesus*, as we find

in his *Apology* to his countrey-men and King *Agrippa*, *Acts* 22. 2. & 26. 9.

AND of the abetters of those Novel doctrines which after-times produced, we have reason to think many were of this Sort, especially in those Heresies, which though they carried *secret venome* in them, had yet a *plausible appearance* of Sanctity and Devotion; such was that of the *Encratites*, which seem'd to be founded in the veneration of two great Vertues *Continence* and *Temperance*, though by extending them beyond the due limits, they lost that *Sobriety* they too strictly embraced, and became *inordinate* in their Continence, and *excessive* in their Abstinence: Such again were the *Euchitæ* or *Messalians*, who made the whole business not only of *religion* but even of *life* to consist *in praying*; and though by it they evacuated all other ends of both, yet having the *letter* of a Precept, and the *pretence* of Devotion on their side, 'twas a *proper bait* for those who had *much* Zeal and *little* Knowledge. In like manner the *Novatians* Heresie had so glorious an inscription of Purity, as was very apt to attract well meaning Souls; who seeing it bid such express *defiance to Apostacy*, could not suspect that it was itself any *defection from the faith*; and accordingly some of that Sect approved their constancy in times both of *Heathen* and *Arian* persecutions. Nor must we be so uncharitable to the modern times, as not to believe many have acted upon the like Principles, and meant truth and piety, even while they actually promoted

promoted the contrary. But how ſincere ſoever the *purpoſes* of ſuch ſeduced Perſons were, yet 'tis evident the Church has ſuffer'd no leſs by *them*, than by the *more crafty deſigners*: their *miſguided piety* has made as great and incurable Ruptures, as the moſt *flagitious blaſphemies* of others. And when a *rent* is once made, it matters little, whether it were done by *error* or *malice*; nay perhaps as to the hopes of repairing, the former may be the more deſperate: for whereas *he* that knowingly *commits* an Ill, has the *Upbraidings* of his own Conſcience towards his reducing; theſe on the other ſide have its *Cheriſhings* and *Encouragements*, to confirm and animate them. And doubtleſs they are great advantages which *Satan* has in all ages made of ſuch Perſons, whom he ſeems to have deluded in the ſame manner, that *Medea* is ſaid to have done the daughters of *Pelias*, whom ſhe perſwaded to hack their *aged Father* in pieces, in hope that by her *Magick*, he ſhould not only recover *life* but *youth*: ſo theſe rend and tear their *Mother* the Church, out of a hope no leſs deluſive, of reſtoring her *priſtine beauty* and *vigor*; how far the Event parallels it alſo, the dying ſtate of *Chriſtianity* does too ſadly teſtifie.

NOR has it only been the Heat of *Erring perſons* that has been thus miſchievous, but ſometimes *men of right judgments* have too much contributed to the breach of Unity, and the intemperate and imprudent *Zeal* of theſe hath ſerv'd to exaſperate the miſtaking *earneſtneſs* of the other:

this happens ſometimes for want of diſtinguiſhing between the *Eſſentials* and *Circumſtantials* of Religion, and ſo looking upon a miſtake in the *later* with the deteſtation proper only to the perverting of the *former*; by this means thoſe who have entirely embraced the ſame *faith*, have yet violated *charity* and broken *communion*: ſuch ſlight *minute differences* when managed by eager Spirits being eaſily blown up into ſolemn and *laſting contentions*; ſo that the Diſputes rais'd about ſome *pin* or *nail* of the Temple, have ſometimes ſhaken and endanger'd the *whole Fabrick*, robbed the Church of that fraternal unity which was its faſteſt cement, and ſureſt ſupport. Of this we need no more apt inſtance from Antiquity than that which has been already mentioned upon another occaſion, I mean *Victors* unbrother-like Heat towards the Eaſtern Churches in the *controverſie* about *Eaſter*, which had fomented that Difference into a Schiſm, which the meeker Piety of his Predeceſſors thought no ground of *unkindneſs*, much leſs of *Separation*, as *Irenæus* more at large tells him; And probably had men in all the ſucceeding Ages deliberately *poiz'd* the Errors they oppos'd, and proportion'd their Diſpleaſure but to the *juſt weight* of them, many of our *diſputes* would have been ſo calm'd, that they ſhould never have become *quarrels*. But many in this particular have only us'd the *Touch-ſtone*, not the *Scales*: and of Opinions that are erroneous, conſider not which are more or leſs pernicious, but with an equal violence fly at all, as

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if the *Stoical* opinion concerning *Sins* had prevail'd in *Errors* alſo, and that all were reſolv'd to be of the ſame ſize.

BUT even in thoſe of the higheſt kind it may perhaps be doubted, whether *too eager an oppoſition* have not ſometimes done *hurt*, eſpecially in thoſe Doctrines which relate to the *myſterious parts* of Religion, wherein a *novelty* is at firſt lookt upon with ſome horror, and many are willing rather to *condemn* in groſs than nicely to *examine*: Who yet when they find this done for them by *Orthodox perſons*, they think they may with ſuch a guide venture to wade into the queſtion, where many times the *inſinuations* of Error are ſo ſubtile, that all their *Antidotes* ſecure them not from *infection*, but they are themſelves *captivated* where they expected only to *triumph*. Neither want there thoſe of the *Vulgar* that are of a more *inſolent temper*; and out of a vanity of making themſelves *Umpires* between learned men, greedily read the writings of both Parties, who yet are able to make no *ſolid judgment* of either; and when 'tis remembred how many *popular artifices* there are to byaſſe ſuch perſons, we muſt confeſs that *Truth* hath many to one *Odds* againſt her: Beſides, *publick arguing* oft ſerves not only to exaſperate the *minds*, but to whet the *Wits* of *Hereticks*, and by ſhewing them the *weak parts* of their Doctrines, prompts them to rally all their *Sophiſtry* to fortifie them, that what they want of *truth* and *reaſon*, may be ſupplied with *fallacy* and little colours; and Experience ſhews how fitly that

that kind of *Logick* is accommodated to the greatest part of the World. In short, it seems not improbable, that many Heresies owe much of their *growth* to the improper means of *eradicating* them: and have acquir'd a *reputation* from the *stir* that was made about them. Thus *Socrates* tells us that *Alexanders* letters about the *Arian* Heresie serv'd to scatter that pestilent infection the more abroad, and combin'd men into parties, so that the whole *world* became the *Scene* of that long Tragedy, which possibly might have had a shorter and better *issue*, had not the notice of the Controversie been so early dispers't.

BUT if the Attempts of the *Pen* have often proved so unfit, it may be consider'd whether those of the *sword* are not more so, and *fighting* be not a worse expedient than *disputing*: and certainly we have great reason to conclude in the affirmative, if we weigh either the Injustice, or Unreasonableness of it. I know there want not those who have thought the propagating Religion by Arms not only *lawful* but *meritorious*, and that in order to the *planting* it in a Nation, the *soil* may be mellowed with the *bloud* of the Inhabitants; nay the *old* extirpated, and *new* Colonies planted. But we are to remember that as God is the *universal Monarch* of the World, so We have all the relation of *fellow-subjects* to him, and can pretend no farther jurisdiction over each other, than what he has delegated to us: and sure 'twould be hard to produce any commission

miſſion from him for the invading a Nation only becauſe 'tis not of our Faith. 'Tis ſure, *thoſe* to whom he firſt entruſted the promulgating of the Goſpel had far *different inſtructions*, and 'twere fit our *new Evangeliſts* ſhould ſhew their *later authority* for this ſanguinary Method; in order to which though ſome have made uſe of the *Opinion* of ſome Schoolmen, that *dominion is founded in Grace*, yet as that is but an Opinion, ſo were it admitted as the moſt certain Truth, it could never warrant any enterprize of this kind, for ſuppoſing that a people by wanting *ſpiritual* Bleſſings did loſe all their right to *temporal*, yet that Forfeiture muſt devolve only to the Supreme Lord, and when as God in another caſe asks, where is the *bill of divorce? Eſay* 50. 1. ſo we may demand of theſe zealous Invaders, where is the *bill of aſſignment*, by which that right was transferr'd to them? In ſhort, *peace* is the moſt valuable bleſſing of humane life, and we cannot without injuſtice deprive man of it, though we could as we pretend, give them *truth* in lieu of it; for maugre the *Proverb*, that *Exchange will ſtill be robbery*, where the parties are compell'd to make it. But alas, 'tis a vain imagination to think that Religion can be thus impos'd: or that we can bind the *underſtandings* and *wills* of men, with the ſame fetters we do their *bodies*; 'tis true indeed the Apoſtle tells us *there is a way of bringing every thought into Captivity to the obedience of Chriſt*, but he tells us withal that the *weapons*, by which that Victory is atchieved, *are*

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not Carnal, 2*Cor.*10. 4. Indeed did Religion conſiſt only in ſome external *conformities*, external *force* might bear ſome proportion to it (which perhaps is the cauſe that the one is moſt us'd by thoſe whoſe religion is moſt eminent for the other) but 'tis ſeated in thoſe *faculties* to which *outward violence* can have no acceſs. Alas, 'tis not whole Armies can beſiege my *reaſon*, nor Cannons batter my *will*, 'tis *conviction* not *force*, that muſt induce Aſſent; and ſure the *Logick* of a conquering Sword has no great propriety that way; *Silence* indeed it may, but *convince* it cannot: Its efficacy rather lies on the other ſide, breeds averſion and abhorrence of that Religion, whoſe firſt addreſs is in bloud and rapine: nor do ſuch *attempts* gain any thing to the Cauſe but the *infamy* of thoſe rigors which are us'd to promote it. And ſure ſince this piece of *Mahumetan* Zeal has been tranſplanted into *Chriſtendom*, it has been much more miſchievous than in its native ſoil. Chriſtianity having been infinitely more oppreſſed by thoſe that thus fought *for* it, than thoſe that were in Arms *againſt* it. Whether upon this ſcore the *Pope* have not done her more harm than the *Turk*. I leave to conſideration.

BUT what is here ſaid of the *military* Sword. I intend not ſhould be applied to the *Civil*; for I treat not here of thoſe legal puniſhments, which *Magiſtrates* inflict upon their diſobedient Subjects; who indeed may *juſtly*, nay indeed muſt *neceſſarily* require Conformity to *Eccleſiaſtical* laws,

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as well as the *Civil*: the Eruptions in the *one* commonly overflowing the *other* alſo, and *Schiſm* uſually ending in *Rebellion*; ſo that 'tis apparently their intereſt to guard themſelves from thoſe riotous effects of pretended zeal, nor is it leſs their duty, they being as the Ancients expreſs it, *Cuſtodes utriuſque tabulæ* in St. *Paul's* language, *the miniſters of God*, *Rom.* 13. and in *Conſtantines* dialect, Ἐπίσκοποι τῶν ἐκτὸς, *Biſhops in the whole outward adminiſtration of the Church*, and if Hereſie or Schiſm be a *ſin*, are by their places obliged to approve themſelves *avengers*; to execute wrath no leſs there, than in other circumſtances: And that they are ſins and of no ſmall bulk, none can doubt that obſerves *Hereſie* ranked, *Gal.* 5. with *Idolatry*, *Witchcraft*, *hatred*, *murders*, and other ſins of the fleſh; or *Schiſm* markt out by the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews*, as a kind of *petrifying crime*, which induces that induration, to which the fearful expectation of wrath is conſequent, for ſo we find, *Heb.* 10. 26. that *forſaking the aſſemblies* is lookt on as previous to *Apoſtacy* and final deſection: And therefore ſure the Magiſtrate can do nothing kinder even to the Offenders than by taking their ſin early, prevent that fatal growth of it. But that his juſt power thus reſcued, I may aſſume my former aſſertion, and conclude, that all other Violences are ſo far from *advancing* Chriſtianity, that they extremely *weaken* and *diſadvantage* it.

BUT of no ſort is this more eminently true than of thoſe *popular heats*, where the People undertakes

dertakes to chaſtiſe *error*: for beſides that the outrages then committed are very apt to avert men even from truths which they ſee ſo barbarouſly defended, it often happens that the *multitude* take *cauſleſs alarms*, and think their Faith is invaded when it is not. A memorable inſtance of this kind *Euagrius* gives in his Eccl. Hiſtory, where he tells us that the Emperor *Anaſtaſius* having added to the *Triſagium* this Clauſe, *Who was crucified for our Salvation*, the whole City of *Conſtantinople* was in an uproar, upon an ignorant jealouſie that thoſe words had ſome Heretical meaning; in which fury they happening to light upon a poor ſilly *Monk*, they immediately kill him as the *Inventor* of that clauſe, and a *conſpirer* againſt the Trinity: So unhappily abſurd are the Tranſports of *wild zeal*, which where it rules, does beſides the *direct miſchiefs* of Tumult and Sedition create *others* at the rebound, which are more permanent, and diſcompoſe and embitter mens ſpirits, and render them ſo ambitiouſly *greedy* of *quarrels* for their Religion, that they are not only prepar'd to *receive*, but to *ſeek* Encounters: and 'tis too ſure they can never be wanting to perſons of ſuch tempers, ſince the *adverſaries* of Truth cannot have more *advantage* or Encouragement againſt it, than this *unpeaceable humour* of thoſe that profeſs it.

BY theſe ſeveral ways has it come to paſs, that even that *zeal* which ſhould be the *life* of Chriſtianity, is become its diſeaſe; and *Religion* like a *Hectick body* is conſum'd by its own *heats*, if at leaſt I may call thoſe its own, which de-

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rive not from its proper and native conſtitution; but are the accidents of its declining ſtate: for how confidently ſoever men pronounce of themſelves, and believe that they are then moſt *pious*, when they are moſt *eager* and *unquiet*; yet 'tis ſure this is far removed from the true *genius* and temper of *religion*, which like the *God* it worſhips, makes its approaches not in *winds* and *Earthquakes*, but in the *ſtill ſmall voice*, 1 *Kings* 19. 12. And when 'tis conſider'd, that the greateſt part of the Evangelical Law is made up of *precepts* of Meekneſs, Long-ſuffering, and Condeſcention; we muſt conclude that *zeal* very *prepoſterous*, that pretends to obey by *violating* them; or to eſtabliſh Religion by *undermining* the moſt eſſential parts of it: and to Perſons under that miſtake, we may moſt properly apply the *reproof* given by Chriſt to his Diſciples upon the ſame occaſion, *you know not what manner of Spirit you are of.*

IT will therefore become men to look with *Jealouſie* on themſelves in this particular; not too confidently to *purſue* every Incitation which carries a ſhew of Piety; but ſoberly to *weigh* how it agrees with the Rules and Oeconomy of that Goſpel for which it pretends ſo much concern; for though the *true Chriſtian Zeal* can never be too much cheriſhed; yet alas, 'tis not *every warmth* we feel about Religion that can own *that Title*; and ſure we do not more often, or more fatally miſtake any think than in applying that venerable *name* to things of a far *inferior*, nay ſometimes of a *contrary* nature. How often upon

upon this Error, have men aſcrib'd that to their *piety* which they owed to their *complexions*, and thought 'twas their *religion* made them Earneſt, when 'twas merely their *conſtitution*: Nay, how often has *Satan* taken this advantage of transforming himſelf into an *Angel of light*, and inſinuating his illuſions under this diſguiſe. And truly they muſt ſtill be liable to both theſe deceits, ſo long as they place the *eſſence* of Chriſtian zeal in *heat* and *eagerneſs*. 'Tis true indeed it has its heats, but actuated in a far different way; it has flames of *Love*, not of *Anger*; to melt, not conſume our Enemies; and makes us apter to pour out our *own bloud* a Sacrifice to Truth than *that of gainſayers*. In ſhort, if it be a Fire, 'tis that *pure Elemental* which the *Peripateticks* talk of, which is but of a moderate heat; apt to *cheriſh*, not *devour*.

AND would God men would ſo far believe this, as to think there may be *moderation*, without the danger of *Laodicean luke-warmneſs*, and upon that ſuppoſition ſuffer themſelves to cool into a treatable Temper, and then I ſhould humbly offer to them theſe few Conſiderations.

FIRST the great and univerſal *fallability* of humane Nature, which renders it not only poſſible that we *may*, but certain that every one of us *ſhall* erre in ſomething or other; and this ſure is very proper to perſwade lenity to thoſe whom we find actually erring. 'Tis the *Apoſtles* argument in the caſe of Sin, *Gal.* 6. 1. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are ſpiritual, reſtore ſuch a one in the ſpirit of meekneſs, conſidering thy*

thy ſelf, leſt thou alſo be tempted. Where the common Peccability of mankind is urged to induce Commiſeration & Gentleneſs towards the Offenders; and if this be of force *in ſin*, where the concurrence of the will renders the perſon more inexcuſable, it will ſurely hold much more in *bare Error*, which being purely involuntary, (for nothing is properly Error farther than it is ſo) 'tis to be lookt on rather as the *diſeaſe* than *crime* of the Perſon: and ſince we uſe not to exclaim againſt men for being *ſick*, but compaſſionately to endeavour their *recovery*, why ſhould we here uſe ſo much a *contrary method*? 'Tis true indeed, 'tis neceſſary ſometimes in order to the *Cure*, and ſometimes for preventing the *infection* of others, to do ſome things *uneaſie* to the Patient; and what tends regularly to either of theſe Ends, may in this caſe alſo be Charitably done, by thoſe that have Authority: but *that* differs as far from our uſual *ſeverities*, as the *lancings* of a Phyſician do from the *wounds* of an Adverſary; or *publick* Diſcipline from *private* Spleen. So that notwithſtanding this, we may reſume our *concluſion* & infer from the *Errableneſs* of our Nature, the *reaſonableneſs of compaſſion* to the ſeduced. And as it thus prompts us to look *gently* upon others, ſo alſo to reflect *impartially* upon our ſelves; and conſider how poſſible it is, that even whileſt we condemn others, we may indeed be in the wrong; and then all the Invectives we make at their *ſuppoſed* Errors, fall back with a rebounded force upon our own *real* ones. If this poſſibility were but adverted

to, it would make us less positive and Dogmatical in our opinions, and so consequently take away one main ground of contention; for though we often quarrel about *matters*, which are indeed but *conjectural*, yet not till we esteem them *otherwise*; and when we consider how many men have vehemently believed *apparent falshoods*, it may well allay our *confidences* in all those cases, where we have not some *firmer ground* than our *own* (or indeed any humane) *judgment* to build on it.

AS for those who have the *surest grounds* of Perswasion, and by their security of being themselves in the Truth, have the more *reason* to be earnest in propagating it to others: let them in the second place consider how necessary 'tis to chuse *appropriate means* to that good end, without which they do but undermine *themselves*, and defeat their own *aims*. Indeed Prudence is not only a *Moral*, but *Christian* Vertue; and such as is necessary to the constituting of all others: without it Devotion degenerates into Superstition, Liberality into Profuseness, and this of Zeal becomes only a Pious kind of Phrensie. And of Persons so possest, God may say as *Achish* did of *David*, 1 *Sam.* 25. 15. *have I need of mad men?* No sure, the *defence of Truth* is too *noble a cause* to be so managed; its *Champions* are not like men in a fray to make every thing a weapon that they can first snatch up, and lay on as chance or fury guides, but are deliberately to consult the propereſt expedients, use not only *force* but *Stratagem* against the Enemy, & yet withal to take care that while they

oppose

oppoſe one, another gain not *advantage*: For alas, 'tis indifferent to our grand *Adverſary*, by which of his temptations we fall, and if by ſubverting the *faith* of ſome, he ſhipwrack the *charity* of others, he has his *end*, and triumphs at once both over the *ſpeculative* and *practick* part of our Religion.

AND this may induce a farther conſideration, & prompt us to examine what degree of guilt lies on thoſe who either out of a blind, or raſh zeal have given him this advantage. And here though I cannot doubt, but God makes *great allowances* to the Miſcarriages of *ſincere intentions*, yet perhaps we have carv'd more liberally to our ſelves than he deſigns us, and preſume our Security greater than in truth it is. For how innocent ſoever a good purpoſe may make our *Error*, yet 'tis a priviledge beyond all poſſibility of grant, that our *ſins* ſhould be ſo alſo; therefore if our Miſperſwaſions beget wicked practice, we may be accountable for the *one*, though not for the *other*. We find indeed S. *Paul* alledges his *ignorance*, as the Cauſe of his finding *mercy*, for his perſecuting the Church, but we are to remember what that *mercy* he there refers to is; not that of *abſolution*, but *converſion*: and had he reſiſted the *later*, though with never ſo full a perſwaſion of his doing well in it, I much doubt whether his good meaning would have ſecur'd him the *former*; So that all the *encouragement*, that Example can afford is, that God may probably do more for the reducing an *erring* than a *malicious* Perſecutor: And when 'tis conſidered that all the odds that Chriſt makes between him that does ill *knowingly* and

ignorantly, is in the *number* of Stripes: we must resolve our *mistakes* are no such *Amulets* as totally to secure us. And then whether our *guilts* shall not swell in proportion to the *ills* we do, is a question that sure can never be resolved in the negative: for if a *good intention* cannot alter the *nature* of Sin, sure it can as little change their *degree*, or make that of two Persons equally mistaken, the *Murder* of the one, shall not be a greater Crime than an *intemperate speech* of the other. And upon this measure the accounts of erring zeal are like to rise very high with many; unless we can think Rebellion and Bloudshed, Sacriledge and Schism, with all that train of zealous Enormities to be light and trivial.

NOR will it at all legitimate *these*, or any *other* Crimes, though they should happen to be committed in the *defence of Truth*: Of this St. *Peter* is a ready instance, who when to *guard* Him, who was Truth itself, he had *violated* the Authority of the Magistrate in *wounding* an Officer; Christ reprehends his rashness, and instead of applauding his *zeal*, upbraids his *absurdity*, that could think his *mean aids* considerable to him, who could command *Legions of Angels* to his rescue. And sure he is not so much more impotent in his *glory*, than he was in his *exinanition*, as now to need our *Sins* to secure any of his *concerns*; and if St. *Peter* were thus check'd for *using* that Sword which he was a little before warn'd to *buy*, it must sure set an ill Character upon those *tumultuous reformations*, which have so much employed the

zeal

zeal of later ages, to which there can never want a concurrence of several great *sins*, the *guilt* whereof will scarce be wiped off, by their design'd *subserviency* to Truth; what Degree of *extenuation* it may afford, is hard to pronounce, since we have no *rule* to measure it by. But whatsoever it is, we are to remember, that it can belong only to such a Zeal as is *purely religious*, that mixes not with our *Passions* or *Interests*; and therefore before men be too forward to *appropriate* any Indulgence of that kind, 'twill be necessary to *Examine*, whether no sinister Adherent have vitiated that *integrity* of their purpose, to which alone it can (even by their own award and sentence) appertain.

I HAVE insisted the more on *this*, because many are apt to ascribe too unlimitedly to the Force of a *good meaning*, to think that is able to bear the stress of whatsoever Commissions they shall lay on it; and by thus presuming on their *Antidote*, venture boldly on the *deadliest poisons*. To such the foregoing considerations may be useful; and by robbing them of that *imaginary* Security, help them to a *real* one, by making their good *purposes* the Director of good *actions*, not the Apology for bad. This would make Religion look consonant to itself, which now groans under the reproach of all those Ills, that are acted under its Patronage; and sure to rescue her from such a *scandal*, is but a very moderate piece of *compassion*: Yet would God she might obtain it even from *those* who profess themselves her greatest *Votaries*:

But alas, 'tis one ſad circumſtance of her ruine, that ſhe ows it to ſuch; that thoſe Weapons which ſhould *defend* her, thus *recoil* into her Bowels, and *zeal* ſhould do her more miſchief than *prophaneneſs*; for while ſhe is but ſcoffed at by *that*, ſhe is wounded by *this*: nor are thoſe *wounds* ever like to cloſe, till our Zeal grow more *balſamick*, partake of thoſe *healing qualities* of Love and Meekneſs, the Want whereof has rendred it ſo unhappily inſtrumental to our Diſtractions.

CHAP. XVIII.

A Survey of the Cauſes of Diſputes; Sixthly, Idleneſs.

BUT as *this over-active* humour has done abundant Miſchief to the Church, ſo is it obſervable, that the *direct contrary* has done as much; nay, which is yet ſtranger, the one is frequently the product of the other, and our too *buſie zeal* ſprings from our too *great Idleneſs*. How much ſoever this may ſound like *Paradox*, yet both *reaſon* and *experience* atteſt the Truth of it; for we are to conſider that God has put an *active principle* into man, which 'tis impoſſible ſo to ſuppreſs, as that there ſhall be a total ceſſation from *motion*: And therefore every intermitting of ſober, regular actings, makes way for wild Extravagant ones; for as nature is ſaid ſo vehemently to abhor vacuity, that the very inanimate bodies would

would forſake their ſpecifick motions to prevent it: So when the *mind* is Empty, when it has no worthy and profitable *ſpeculation* to Entertain it, every the moſt improper and preternatural *Object* offers itſelf, and importunately crouds in to fill the *vacuum*. This ſeems to have been well underſtood, though ill applied by *Pharaoh*, when he thought the *Iſraelites* propoſal of Travelling into the Wilderneſs to their Devotions, was the Effect of their too great leiſure at home; and therefore encreaſes their *tasks* as the propereſt way of diverting their *deſigns*. And in like manner we find thoſe that treat of *Politicks*, inſiſt upon the neceſſity of keeping the *People buſie*, in order to which it is, that they mention the uſe of *Mathematicks* and other contemplative Sciences, to entertain the *active ſpirits* of a Nation, in demonſtrating of *Problemes*, ſolving *Phænomenas*, and drawing *Schemes* and *Diagrams*, who elſe would be practiſing upon the *Government*, making new *Ideas* and Platforms for the *Common-wealth*: And doubtleſs there is parity of reaſon in the Eccleſiaſtick State, which would have been at *more peace*, had ſome men found themſelves *other diverſions*.

AND this is confirm'd to us by experiment and obſervation of Event; for if we look into the Primitive times, we ſhall find that when there was a neceſſity of defending the *common faith* againſt *Heatheniſm*, when Chriſtians were employed in writing *apologies* and *vindications*, there were much fewer of theſe *inteſtine debates* (at leaſt ſuch as were *Metaphyſical* and purely Notional)

they had their hands full of the *foreign Enemy*, and had the leſs temptation to jangle among *themſelves*. So alſo when they were under the greateſt ſtorms of perſecution, when the Church was moſt violently aſſaulted from *without*, it had the greateſt Calm *within*. They were then inceſſantly employed, and buſied their Thoughts in preparing for the fiery trial. Thoſe cloudy days made them keep cloſe at home waiting for the Bridegrooms coming, and ſuffer'd them not to wander abroad for thoſe unprofitable Curioſities, which though like *Oil* they might nouriſh *flame*, yet would never furniſh their *Lamps*, or gain them admiſſion to the wedding, but in the intervals, and eſpecially after the total ceſſation of their calamity, when their Peace had taken them off their *Vigilance*, then while they ſlept, the Envious man had advantage to ſow his *Tares*. Reſt made them *idle*, Idleneſs made them *curious*, and Curioſity *contentious*; and thoſe who under the Tyranny of a *Nero* or *Domitian* were in perfect harmony under the gentle pious regiment of a *Conſtantine*, grew to the greateſt diſcord, and perhaps (beſides the Divine and extraordinary ſupports the Church had in her greateſt *conflicts*) this may be one of the beſt natural *accounts*, how ſhe came to flouriſh moſt under her heavieſt *preſſures*.

BUT our obſervation ends not here, for beſides this extraordinary importunity of thoughts, which perſecuting times occaſion'd, Chriſtianity is in its frame and conſtitution an *active State*, has its ſtanding buſineſs, and beſides all *accidental*

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a Series of *determinate, conſtant employments*, ſufficient to entertain mens minds: from which we may infer, that when this is throughly adverted to, there will be few *chaſms* of Time to be filled with *foreign impertinencies*. And this gives a clear account how our *diviſions* have come to grow upon us, namely, by the Neglect of *practick duties*, for as every age degenerated more from *Primitive piety*, ſo they advanced farther in *nice enquiries* and *new opinions*; and as the zeal of *practice* grew cool, ſo that of *diſpute* gathered heat and vigor. So that if we conſider how far our *good works* fall ſhort of the firſt Chriſtians, we need not wonder to ſee our *controverſies* ſo far exceed them; that Time which was gain'd from the *one*, being employed in hammering and forging the *other*. I do not forget that I have before ranked this *diverſion* of Chriſtian Practice among the *effects* of our Contentions, and foreſee it may be thought very inartificial here, to make it the *cauſe* alſo: But alas, its concern in them is ſo extravagantly great, as to have at once the relation of Child and Parent, to be both Root and Branch, Fountain and Stream. and like a *circle* unites in *itſelf* Beginning and End: For as it firſt gave *birth* to our quarrels, ſo it finally receives *encreaſe* from them. In ſhort, our oſcitant *lazy piety* gave vacancy for them, & they will now lend none back again for more *active duty*. And as this *neglect* of our general calling of Chriſtianity has been thus pernicious, ſo have the *ill effects* thereof been improved by the like ill attendance on our particular ones. We find St. *Paul* takes

takes notice, that the *younger widows*, who deserted their own *Ecclesiastical* Office, grew *busie-bodies* in the Secular affairs of others; and sure we may with truth invert the note, and observe that *those*, who either desert or neglect their *Secular* Callings, are the most perniciously *medling* in Ecclesiastick matters. Did men conscientiously employ themselves in their *honest occupations*, their Minds would be sufficiently *diverted*, and it would not become the work of Artificers to make new Schemes of Doctrines or discipline; Divinity would not then pass the *Yard* and *Loom*, the *Forge* and *Anvil*, nor Preaching be taken in as an easier supplementary *Trade*, by those that disliked the *pains* of their own. But all this alas, we have seen to the equal shame and detriment of Piety. *Mechanicks* of all sorts have presum'd to *teach* what themselves never *learnt*; and those that serv'd long *Apprentiships* to other Crafts, have become *Divines* in a moment, and with the same emulous industry wherewith they us'd to invent new *fashions*, have made new *Religions*. And as Idleness has thus made some *Preachers*, so it has made more *hearers*, those who either by the *easiness* of their Callings, or their slight managery of them, have had the most *vacant time*, have been the aptest to run after *new Teachers*: Hence it is that Towns and Cities have been the great *nurseries of Faction*, the *leisure* of Shop-men making them more *inquisitive* after, and *receptive* of Novelties. And were that *over-grown zeal* of Sermons, which has now devour'd all other parts of Religion, among that sort

ſort of men throughly ſcanned, we ſhould find Idleneſs goes very far in its *compoſition*; for beſides that Hearing is the moſt *lazy* of all religious Offices, as appears by the *undiſturb'd ſleeps* men can take at Sermons; it is manifeſt this inſatiate appetite of it, is originally founded either in the not *having* buſineſs, or not *attending* to it. For ſhould I ask ſuch men, whether if neceſſity had enforc'd S. *Pauls* rule upon them, that without their *labour* they ſhould not *eat*, they would have ſpent their whole week at *Lectures*, and truſted to be fed by the *Ear*. I believe few could pretend to have begun with ſo exorbitant a zeal, though the truth is in the iſſue it ſometimes arrives to it; and men that have *itching ears* forget the reſt of the *body*, whileſt to gratifie them, they totally neglect all care of their *Secular concerns*, and bring Themſelves and Families to want and beggary.

NOR is it only this *one rank* of Perſons whom Idleneſs has betrayed to faction, *Servants* we have frequently ſeen under the ſame Seducement, while either having but *little work*, or but *little diligence* in it, they have found time to liſten after *novel doctrines*, with which being once tainted, they impatiently thirſt after more, and neglecting the *duties* of their place, ſpend their *time*, which by compact is their Maſters (and can with no more juſtice be purloin'd from him than his goods) in following *factious Teachers*, who inſtruct them ſo in their Chriſtian *liberty*, that they bring them to defie all *ſubjection*: And by telling them they are to call no man Maſter upon *Earth*,

Earth, that they are to own no King nor Prieſt but *Chriſt*; teach them to contemn all Authority, *Domeſtick*, *Civil*, or *Eccleſiaſtick*.

IF we look farther into *families*, we ſhall find alſo that many of our She-zealots become ſo upon the very ſame ground, when *Women* neglect that which St. *Paul* aſſigns them as their proper Buſineſs, *the guiding of the houſe*, their Zeal is at once the *product* and *excuſe* of their Idleneſs; and in ſpight of the *ill Character* the Wiſe-man has ſet on her, *whoſe feet abide not in her houſe*, *Prov.* 7. 11. it becomes the *mark* of a Saint, when a Lecture or Conventicle is taken in the way: And though theſe feminine Irregularities may ſeem to be of no great concern to the publick, yet experience convinces the contrary; it having been the *unhappy priviledge* of that Sex (as ancient as their Mother *Eve*) to be able to do great and important *miſchiefs*; and doubtleſs many *men* may give the ſame account of their Schiſm and Sedition, that *Adam* did of his firſt ſin, *The woman that thou gaveſt me*, &c. This has always been well underſtood by *Seducers*, who have found it the moſt compendious way to their deſigns, *to lead captive ſilly women*, and make them the *Duck-coys* to their whole Family: But even thoſe who have miſt of this influence over the *minds* of their Husbands, have yet had it over their *Purſes*, and out of them ſupported the *Rabbies* of the Faction; who in gratitude to thoſe wiſe *Abigails* give their Husbands the *title*, and perhaps wiſh them the fate of *Nabal*. And God knows, how many men have thus been made

made contributers to the *cauſe* they have moſt deteſted, maintain'd that *fire* which thoſe *incendiaries* have kindled in the Holy place; *Money* being no leſs the *ſinews* of Eccleſiaſtical than Secular *War*.

THUS we ſee how the *Idleneſs* even of the moſt inconſiderable perſons has at the rebound been extremely *pernicious* to the Church, which like a *Clock* or *Watch* may be diſorder'd by the *ruſt* of the leaſt *Pin*; how much more then, by that of the *main wheels* and *ſprings*? If Negligence in *lay-callings* have though but an oblique, yet ſo inauſpicious an Influence, the like Neglect in *Eccleſiaſtick* muſt needs have a worſe, becauſe more immediate and direct. And would to God we could ſay this had been wanting to the compleating the miſchief: But alas, many of thoſe who are called to labour in the *Lords Vineyard*, ſeem to have forgot their Errand, and ſtand there all the day *Idle* (a much worſe ſight than to have ſeen them ſo only in the *Market-place*;) ſo that I fear there is too evident ground of ſaying, that the *ſlight execution* of the Paſtoral Office, has been *one* of the moſt eminent Contributers to our diſtractions. And among *all the parts* of that Charge, none has been more generally, or more perniciouſly neglected than that of *Catechizing*; the want whereof has left People ſo unbottom'd, that like a *houſe* built on the *ſand*, every Wind of Doctrine blows down that Faith which they only profeſt, but underſtood not. This is that which has made ſo many *unſtable Souls*, as St. *Peter* obſerves, 2 *Pet.* 2. 14. to be the proper prey of Deceivers.

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And God knows, we may from ſad experiment confirm the note. I wiſh the ſame *negligence* do not again evidence itſelf by the ſame *effects*: But beſides this, which is part of the *Publick* Miniſtry, (and deſervedly is ſo, being uſeful to the whole Church, the aged as well as children) there are *private* Intercourſes between Paſtor and People which are of *great uſe*, would God they were of *equal practice*: We know a *careful* Shepherd does not only turn his *flock* into a *common Paſture*, and then think he has done his work, but does with a particular advertence obſerve the *thriving* of every one of them, takes notice of their ſingle *ſtrayings* and *diſeaſes*, and accordingly applies himſelf to reduce or cure them, and ſurely the like care is full as neceſſary in the *ſpiritual* Shepherd; 'tis not the *counſel* which is promiſcuouſly diſpenced in a Sermon (and whereof 'tis odds every man takes that which is leaſt proper for him) that will do the the *buſineſs*: Converts come not in now as in St. *Peters* days, in throngs and ſhoals, a more diſtinct and particular application is now neceſſary; men muſt be treated with apart, their particular *wants* diſcern'd, and *applications* accordingly made of *inſtructions*, *reproof* or *comfort*, and 'tis theſe appropriate *Medicines*, that are like to make *ſound flocks*. Had Miniſters generally beſtowed more *pains* this way, they might probably have fruſtrated the *attempts* of Seducers, who could not ſo eaſily have inſinuated themſelves into the people, had they found them thus prepoſſeſt: but while theſe with all the arts of a ſubtile *induſtry* infuſe their

their *poiſons* into every one they meet, nothing but the like *diligence* in adminiſtring *Antidotes*, is like to countermine them. How much of that has been us'd I ſhall leave to the Conſciences of concern'd perſons to determine. But beſides the *ill influence* the Paſtors negligence has on the *People*, it has in reſpect of themſelves an immediate propriety to the advancing our debates, the *leiſure* which is thus acquir'd, being apt to betray *ſpeculative perſons*, to the ſtudy of thoſe *curious queſtions*, which are the great *diſturbers* of our Peace; and of thoſe that ſtudy them ſo few keep themſelves in neutrality, that parties are ſtill fomented by it: whereas were the *practical buſineſs* of their Charge throughly attended, the *remainder of time* would not be more than the *ſtudy* of the more ſolid, uſeful parts of Divinity would exact, and conſequently there would no *ſurplus* be left for thoſe *dangerous impertinencies, which* as the Apoſtle ſays, *ſerve to no profit, but to the ſubverting of the hearers*, 2 *Tim.* 2. 14. But when our Watchmen *ſleep*, 'tis no marvel if they *dream* too, and entertain themſelves and others with thoſe *Phantaſtick notions*, which the great day will manifeſt to have had nothing of *weight* and *reality*, beſides the Miſchiefs they wrought.

AND indeed if we ſcan the *volumes* of thoſe vain Speculations, we ſhall have cauſe to conclude that Idleneſs has *created* as well as *fomented* them; and they had as well wanted Authors as abettors, had men found themſelves more uſeful buſineſs: and that not only the extempo-

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rary *Chimæra's of Phanaticks*, but the more elaborate *nicetie's of the Schools*, have been thus derived: we know *Air* poſſeſſes no *place*, where it firſt finds not a *vacuity*, nor could thoſe lighter *notions*, have filled mens *brains*, had they found them prepoſſeſt with what was more *ſolid*: but when men wanted more *ſubſtantial work* for their Underſtandings, they were fain to employ them thus in making *Cob-webs*, of which they have made a worſe ſort of *Jewiſh* veil in the Sanctuary, and have now involved the *Goſpel* in greater Obſcurities, than the *Law* was before: whence our *Bezaleels* and *Aholiabs* have been inſpir'd for this work I ſhall not determine; but ſure not from him whoſe Character S. *John* gives us (in peculiar reference to Goſpel-revelation) that *he is light, and in him is no darkneſs at all*, 1 Joh. 1. 5.

THUS we ſee even *Idleneſs* wants not its *operation*; but is productive of great and miſchievous *effects*; it being the unhappy *property* of that Vice, that it *ſupplants* itſelf, and by a fatal *Antiperiſtaſis* makes men perniciouſly *active*: ſo that we may truly ſay *ſloth* has made more Buſineſs than *induſtry*. I am ſure in this inſtance it has cut out work for many ages, though of ſuch a kind, that we have little reaſon to wiſh that our *Lord* at his coming ſhould find us *ſo doing*: yet for ought now appears, our *activity* is ſo wholly bent that way, that 'tis like to be the *only*, at leaſt the moſt *intenſe buſineſs* we ſhall be found at.

I MIGHT here take a very apt occaſion to declaim againſt Idleneſs, as the unhappy foun-

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tain of ſo great miſchiefs, but that is a *vice* that has been ſo often *arraign'd*, that I need not repeat thoſe *charges* which all Authors, Natural, Moral and Divine have laid againſt it. Let but this of its being the Original of *faction* be added, and there can be nothing wanting to render it a moſt *dangerous crime*: yea, and a moſt *monſtrous* one too, that operates thus preternaturally, that *freezes* and yet *inflames* men at once, *ſtupifies* and *enrages*: And yet alas, there is as much riddle in its *fate* as its *nature*; 'tis *hated*, and yet *embraced*; generally *decried*, and yet as generally *cheriſhed*: and though it have no *advocates*, has many *friends*. Would God men would at laſt be aſhamed to *be* what they are aſham'd to *own*, and by a diligent attendance on their proper buſineſs, ſecure themſelves firſt from doing *nothing*, and then from doing *ill*; the one being ſo cloſe an Attendant on the other, that 'tis ſcarce poſſible to ſever them. And God knows the Church finds too ſad proof of their connection. *Idleneſs* having ſerv'd as *Aſhes* to keep alive that *fire* which has ſet her in *combuſtion*. Thus unhappily *paſſive* is ſhe in our diſorders, and *acceſſary* to all our Guilts and Puniſhments: All our peccant *humors* concur to her *diſeaſe*, and like a common *mark* ſhe receives *arrows* from all Quarters, we have ſeen how many *Contributers* there are to her *ruin*, every one whereof with a wanton cruelty (like *Cæſar*'s murderers) are ambitious to inflict *new wounds*, and to give her *Supernumerary deaths*; and whileſt ſhe is thus ſurrounded with *Aſſaſſines*, what can we expect,

but that her preſent *languiſhings* ſhould End in *death*; that Chriſtian Religion now crumbled into ſo many *minute fractions*, ſhould like *duſt* be ſcatter'd, and irrecoverably diſſipated; and thus infallibly it muſt be, if either *God* do not miraculouſly countermine us, and do more *for* us than we can do againſt our ſelves, or we recover ſo much ſobriety, as to forbear to *Maſſacre* what we pretend to *Love*, and endeavour to bind up thoſe *wounds*, at which our own Souls are like to *Expire*.

CHAP. XIX.

The Concluſion drawn from all the Premiſſes.

WE have hitherto examin'd the *effects* and *originals* of our contentions, and now the only remaining Enquiry is concerning the *ways* of redreſs. And that will exact no long diſquiſition: for as in *diſeaſes* 'tis ſaid, the knowing the *cauſe* is one half of the *cure*; ſo more eſpecially is it here, where the *remedies* are merely *privative*, and we are not to be healed by *external applications*, but only by *ſubſtracting* thoſe Humors which feed the Malady: There will therefore need no other *preſcription* than to adviſe the *exterminating* of all thoſe Paſſions and Intereſts which have appear'd acceſſary to our quarrels, which though they are become the publick

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Epidemick diſeaſe, yet as the *infection* did, ſo muſt the *cure* ariſe from ſingle perſons: for as we look not a *common Peſtilence* ſhould ceaſe without due care and manage both of the *ſick* and *ſound*: ſo neither can this *Church-plague* ever abate, but by the cure, or fortifying its *individual members*.

LET every man therefore who has any way made himſelf a Party to theſe conteſts, ſeriouſly interrogate his own heart; what it is that has engag'd Him in them: if any of the *ſiniſter motives* before rehearſt, let him for a while ſhift the *Scene*, and inſtead of *accuſing others* as Oppoſites to Truth, *condemn himſelf* as Enemy to Peace: remembring that howjuſt or important ſoever the *cauſe* be, it is not ſo to *him*; whileſt he ſerves his humors and deſigns under its covert. The *Philoſophers* in their darker notions of *Truth* could yet diſcern, that ſhe was not acceſſible to *any* who ſought her not purely for *her ſelf*, with ſincere and ſingle Intentions, and if ſhe entertain no *Pupils* that are not ſo qualified, is it fit ſhe ſhould have *Guardians* and *Champions* of a quite diſtant Temper? No, he that undertakes the defence of *Speculative* Verity, muſt firſt poſſeſs himſelf of that *practick* Truth the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks of, *Pſ.* 51. That *in the inward parts*, ſuch a ſimplicity and integrity of Purpoſe, as may ſupplant all thoſe indirect Aims, purge out every prejudice and paſſion, which may byaſs, and pervert him; and by that time he has done *this*, 'tis odds but he will find a *new face of affairs*, and diſcern that many of thoſe things he ſo fiercely contended about, were

either falſe or trivial; acquir'd their *conſiderableneſs* only from thoſe *magnifying perſpectives* of his own Luſts, through which he viewed them. However till he have thus denudated himſelf of all theſe *encumbrances*, he is utterly unqualified for theſe *Agones*; and how lawfully ſoever others may ſtrive, tis ſure he cannot, that does it upon ſo unlawful grounds, and therefore upon *pain* of loſing much more than a *corruptible crown* muſt *withdraw himſelf*. As for thoſe who can yet *acquit* themſelves from having fomented our Diſtractions, I ſhall not forbid them to look with great complacency upon it, but rather by conſidering how valuable a *piece of Innocency* it is, engage and encourage themſelves to *preſerve* it; and to that purpoſe, jealouſly to examine the *firſt overtures* of a Temptation. When they find any *proneneſs* to immerſe in Faction, any unwonted *heat* towards a Diſſenter, to trace it to its *fountain* and *original*; nicely to obſerve whether it iſſue not from ſome of thoſe *envenom'd ſprings* forementioned, and make as much haſt to ſtop its *current*, as they would to impede the moſt *overwhelming inundation*; for ſuch 'twill infallibly prove to thoſe who indulge to its courſe. But as a *Turf* will at firſt cloſe the *breach*, which neglected becomes the *inlet* of a mighty *Torrent*: ſo had this *early vigilance* been us'd, it might with eaſe have prevented thoſe Diſtempers, in *private* Breaſts, from whence the *general* Confuſion has ſprung. As it is, might but theſe two things be obtain'd, would but the Guilty *purge*, and the Innocent *guard* them-

themſelves, we might yet hope to ſee an *end* of our Diſcords: not that I ſuppoſe it poſſible to extinguiſh *all diverſity* of Opinions among men, who from their *differing faculties*, and other *guiltleſs occurrents*, may and will have their *judgements* ſeverally diſpos'd. But firſt, were *all*, who have upon the former culpable motives enter'd the liſts, *excluded*, we ſhould find They would amount to ſuch a number, that there would be *few left* to maintain the Combat. Nay, ſecondly, were it not for thoſe *conceal'd inducements*, there would ſcarce be any *Combat* to maintain, thoſe are the things that convey the *ſting* and *malignity* into our Differences, without thoſe we might diſſent, but not fall out; and ſhould no more be angry to ſee another *opine contrary to us*, than we are to ſee him of a *different ſtature*, or *complexion*. In fine, let us pretend what we will, 'tis the Carnality *within*, that raiſes all the Combuſtions *without*: This is the great *wheel* to which the Clock ows its *motion*, while the *pretext* of Truth and Piety is but like the *hand*, ſet indeed more conſpicuouſly, but directed wholly by the *ſecret movings* of the other. This, *this* alone is it which creates and continues our broils, and by a monſtrous conjunction of *Properties*, is itſelf both *flame* and *fuel*: Nor can we doubt that from hence ſpring thoſe railing accuſations, we bring one againſt another, if we remember what S. *Jude* tells us, that the *Angel* brought them not even againſt the *Devil* himſelf, he could calmly manage a *diſpute* with the moſt execrable and provoking *adverſary*, becauſe his

Angelick nature had none of that *carnal leven* which ferments to the *ſouring* of ours, an evident indication what it is that has rendred our arguings ſo invective, that *divinity* ſeems now an Artifice to elude *law* by daily patronizing thoſe *Libels*, which would elſe be Obnoxious to *civil Juſtice*.

BUT I preſume there need no more be ſaid to evince this, which has, I fear, the atteſtation of too many conſciences, to be generally doubted; the *greater difficulty* will be, to perſwade the depoſiting of thoſe *luſts*, which though they are confeſſly the *Boutefeus* among us, have yet by I know not what Faſcination ſo *endear'd* themſelves, that we tenaciouſly *retain* them in ſpight of all their appendent Miſchiefs; nay, we *cheriſh* and *foſter* them, and for that very purpoſe bring them under the *covert* of Religion. He that has but a *puny vice*, if he get it like *Joaſh* conceal'd and ſhelter'd in the *Sanctuary*, 'twill not only *live*, but *reign* too. Put on a Port and Majeſty, and appear venerable upon the pretence of that Piety, whoſe Eſſence and Being it evacuates and undermines.

INDEED ſin never arrives at ſo luxuriant a *growth*, as when it roots in *hallowed ground*, which *Satan* ſo well knows, that he has ever been induſtrious to *plant* it in that *ſoil*. Thus we find he had introduced the moſt *brutiſh crimes* into the religion of the *Gentiles*, interwoven them into their Sacred *Rites* and *Myſteries*, till vertue and vice had changed names, and it became *piety* to be Wicked, and *profaneneſs* to be Innocent. And when that groſs deceit became detected *by Goſpel-light*, when he

he could not in the ſame manner obtrude upon *Chriſtians*, he yet found the way to do it more obliquely, and by ſtarting theſe religious *quarrels*, gave at once employment and reputation to the moſt irreligious *vices*. For alas, what part of wild *fury* was there in the Heathen *Bacchanals*, which we have not ſeen Equall'd if not Exceeded by ſome *intoxicated zealots*? Or what *cruelty* in their moſt barbarous *rites*, which has not been matcht by the *inhumanity* of diſſenting Chriſtians? So that upon a juſt ſcanning, all our ſplendid *pretence* of Sanctity is but an *emulation* of Gentile Impurity under a better name; and while we damn Heathens for their *Moral vertues*, We are yet ſo ſtupid as to hope our ſelves to be ſaved by their *worſt vices*

AND now who that does enough *conſider* can think he can enough *bewail* this ſad ſtate of affairs: That Chriſtianity ſhould thus out-run itſelf, and bring us round to *Gentiliſm* again, whilſt her Profeſſors ridiculouſly contend for the *title* of the beſt Chriſtians, by *ſuch acts* as denominate them none at all. Thus have we inverted the *ſignificancy* of that *Sacred Name*, and made it ſerve only to upbraid the *contrariety* of *our practice*; ſo that *that* which was once the *Index* to point out all *Moral* and *Divine vertues*, does now on the contrary mark out *that part* of the World, where *leaſt of them* reſide. This, this alone is the *prize* we have acquir'd with ſo much *ſweat* and *blood*, this the *Triumph* we have brought to our Religion, which indeed could never have ſunk to ſuch a *deſpicableneſs* by any Endeavours but our

own; for ſo long as Chriſtianity waged *war* only with *foreign* enemies ſhe never miſt to be *victorious*, but ſince that theſe *inteſtine diſcords* have turn'd her force againſt *her ſelf*, *Bella geri placuit nullos habitura triumphos*, there is no poſſibility of ſucceſs, the mere *fight* implies a *defeat*, and the *ſwords* of all Parties meet in her *bowels*. 'Twas a paſſionate *expoſtulation* that *Julia* is ſaid to have us'd with her two ſons *Antonine* and *Geta*, whoſe animoſities having prompted them to *divide* the Empire, which they were joyntly to have *enjoyed*, ſhe askt them whether they would divide their Mother alſo; implying how much their *diſcords* had rackt and torn her. And ſure our *common Mother* may make a yet ſadder *complaint* of her Sons, by whoſe *unkind diſſentions* ſhe is ſo miſerably *mangled*, that ſhe may cry out with the *Pſalmiſt*, *My ſoul is among Lions, and I lye among the Children of men that are ſet on fire.*

AND now if amidſt all our *importunate pretences* to Piety, there be indeed any ſuch thing among us, methinks it ſhould give us ſome *relentings*, make us ſadly conſider to what a *deplorable condition* we have brought that very *religion* on which we profeſs to hang all our *hopes*; and would God thoſe who are the moſt nearly concerned in this Contemplation would purſue it to the utmoſt; let them on the one hand ſet the moſt *glittering temptations* to Diſcord, and on the other let them view the *diſmal effects* of it, and then conſider at how *dear a rate* they gratifie a few *impotent Paſſions*. Can any man without Horrour

rour think that his *thirst* of Glory has brought *dishonour* to his Religion, and consequently to his God; that his *curious enquiries* into things secret, has helpt to Evacuate the more *useful things* Revealed; or in short, that his *pursuit* of his various *interests* and *appetites* has destroyed what was so incomparably more valuable, the *honour* of the Gospel, the *unity* of the Church, and as many *souls* as have perisht by that scandal. 'Twas as infamous a Character of *inhumanity* as the very *Poets* could feign of *Diomedes*, that *he fed his horses with mans flesh*; but alas, that barbarity is here infinitely out-done, when Men nourish far *worse bruits*, their own unreasonable *lusts*, with those things that are most *sacred*. Certainly were the vastness of this *guilt* throughly weighed, 'twould make men sick of those petty wretched *acquests* they have thus purchased, make them fling back this *price of blood*, I say not with the same *despair*, but with as great *remorse* and *detestation* as *Judas* did the *silver pieces* for which he sold his Master. Tis sure the crimes have too great an affinity, as in all other circumstances, so especially in this, that as the one *was*, so the other *is* most frequently the Guilt of an *Apostle*, I mean of those to whom Christ has committed the dispensing of that Gospel which they thus evacuate, and doubtless this is a consideration of great enhansement, as that which superadds *treachery* to all the other pestilent *ingredients* of the Crime; 'tis the *falsifying* the most important *trust*, for under words of that signification we find the *office* of the Ministry

ſtry every where repreſented in Scripture, as *Stewards*, *Ambaſſadors*, *Shepherds*, and conſequently the accounts of the ſin muſt ſwell ſo much the higher. For a Steward to *embezle* thoſe Goods he undertakes to *manage*; an Ambaſſador to *betray* his Prince for whom he ſhould *negotiate*; a Shepherd to *worry* that Flock which he is ſet to *guard*, theſe are crimes that double their malignity from the quality of the Actors; and yet this is undeniably the Guilt of all *thoſe* whoſe *profeſſion* having devoted them to the *Church*, have impiouſly chang'd the *Scene*, and devoted the Church to *them*, ſerv'd all their mean degenerous ends upon her; and as *Chirurgeons* are ſaid ſometimes to deal with profitable Patients, kept open, nay widened her *wounds* for their own *advantages*.

IT has been the *Prieſts Litany* as ancient as *Joels* time, *Spare thy people O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach*; but now alas, who ſhall prevail with them to do that themſelves which they beg of God, to ſpare his people and his heritage; to proſtitute them no more to their own ſiniſter deſigns, nor by their vain and endleſs *contentions*, expoſe them as well to *ruine* as *contempt*. He were indeed a happy Orator that could in this effectually intercede with them, though One would think the *wonder* ſhould lye on the other ſide, and the only ſtrange thing be, that they ſhould either *need* or *reſiſt* ſuch a ſolicitation, it being ſo much the concern of all that ought, as well upon the ſcore of *advantage* as *duty*, to be dear to them; ſo that the *Church* may moſt aptly addreſs

addreſs to theſe her *Sons* in the ſame form S. *Paul* does to the *Philippians* when he conjures them to unity, *Phil.* 2.1. *If therefore there be any conſolation in Chriſt, if any comfort of love, if any fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil you my Joy that you be like minded.* And can it be poſſible for any who have taſted all or any of theſe, to think fit to wrangle them away; to exchange theſe divine *irradiations*, the Antepaſt and Emblem of Heaven, for thoſe bitter *diſſentions*, whoſe *Alpha* and *Omega*, their *orginal* and *end* are Hell, and do as lively repreſent as they certainly lead to the horrour and confuſion of that land of Darkneſs.

BUT if ſome mens appetites be ſo depraved, that they find more Melody in *diſcord*, than in the *harmony* of the Angelick Quires, yet even theſe can diſcern *Muſick* in a conſort of *Plaudites*, and ſeldom miſs to be affected with thoſe *Eulogies* which are given themſelves; and therefore though they disjoyn the Apoſtles motives, *Phil.* 4. 8. and will do nothing for vertue, yet they may be preſum'd more conſiderate of Praiſe: And God knows, in a wrong ſenſe they are too much ſo; and ſure, as we have already obſerved by it, have made no ſmall *contributions* to our *diſcords*: yet did they meaſure *Glory* by its right and proper *Standard*, they would find they have all this while courted a *ſhadow*, and that the *ſubſtance* will never be acquir'd by being *fomenters* of publick Miſchief; but the unhappineſs of it is, that our *Eccleſiaſtick* as our *Secular* Duelliſts abuſe themſelves with falſe notions of Honor, novel

Opinions

Opinions and ſubtile Queſtions they think atteſt the *pregnancy* and *acuteneſs* of their Underſtandings, and give them *reputation*; but alas, how vain an imagination is this? Who admires the *Sagacity* of the Viper, that Eats her way through her *mothers bowels*? Or who reverences a man for the *ſharpneſs* of that Sword wherewith he commits his *Paricide*? Nay, what more infamous brands have Records of all ages ſtuck upon any, than thoſe who were *Ingenioſiſſime nequam, & facundi malo publico*, who us'd the beſt Parts to the worſt Ends, and with the greateſt *cunning* and *artifice* have contrived their *miſchiefs*?

BUT could we abſtract from theſe *pernicious effects*, and ſuppoſe that this *exerciſe* of their Faculties were *innocent*, yet ſure it would be too *light* and *impertinent* to become *matter of praiſe*. He that ſhould ſpend all his Time in *tying* inextricable Knots, only to baffle the Induſtry of thoſe that ſhould attempt to *unlooſe* them, would ſure be thought not much to have ſerv'd his generation. 'Tis one of the certaineſt *Eſtimates* we can make of a man, to meaſure him by the *employments* he chuſes, if thoſe be *ſlight* and *trifling*, they ſuggeſt the Perſon to have *low thoughts*; what an abaſement of Majeſty was it thought in *Nero* to become a *Fidler* and *Stage-player*; and *Herodian* tells us, that men hoped no longer for any thing princely from *Commodus* the Emperor, when he had once liſted himſelf among the *Fencers*, and inſtead of the magnificent *ſtyles* of his Predeceſſors, derived from the *conqueſts* of great and popu-

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lous Nations, aſſumed This, *The vanquiſher of a Thouſand Gladiators*: And certainly 'tis no leſs a deſcent and diminution for thoſe who were deſign'd by God for the *higheſt atchievements*, the ſubduing the Kingdom of Satan, and pulling down his ſtrong holds, to devote themſelves to theſe ſo much *ignobler conteſts*, and account their *conqueſts*, not from the number of *Souls* won to God, but of *Oppoſers* worſted in Argument. Indeed, as we before obſerv'd, they have now rendred the *Church* a kind of *Theatre*, Diſputes are managed with ſuch Sleight and Sophiſtry, that at the beſt, the *Litigants* do but ſet forth a ſhew of *Fencers*: 'Twere well if they did not ſometimes play the *Gladiators*, by that wounding deadly ſharpneſs they uſe, and 'twould be conſider'd what a change is now made: In the Primitive times, none that own'd any *relation* to the Church were allowed to be *ſpectators* of thoſe Games, now That is made the *Stage*, and her ableſt Perſons the *Actors*. But certainly 'tis very little to the reputation of thoſe who have ſo unworthily debaucht both it and themſelves; and therefore to all other *diſſwaſives* we may add this of the *Uncreditableneſs*: For let men phancy what they pleaſe of the *Glory* acquir'd in theſe opportunities of ſhewing their parts, the beſt that can be ſaid of them is, that *they uſe Wit fooliſhly*, A character whereof the one part devours the other, and leaves not ſo much as a mouthful of that *popular air* which theſe *Camalions* gaſp after. In a word, though *vain-glory* be a principle I ſhall commend

to

to no man, yet in this caſe 'twere more tolerable if it would work the right way, put them upon what were really *praiſe-worthy*, and then ſure 'twould encline them rather to *cloſe* than *widen* the breaches of *Sion*. To inflict *wounds* on an unreſiſting Patient, is a thing that requires neither *courage* nor *skill*: Every man can do that who has but ill nature enough; but to *cure* them is an act at once of *Art* and *Mercy*, and entitles to the Praiſe of both; and therefore if any mans *eagerneſs* of Glory have made him over-ſee the *way* to it, let him now at laſt recover his *wandrings*, and ſeek it in this one only proper *Method*.

BUT this is, I confeſs, a *Topick* of Perſwaſion fitter for *Philoſophers* than *Divines*, and I wiſh I may have urg'd it impertinently; it being much leſs ſhame for *me* to have done ſo, than for *them* to need ſuch an Argument. There is another more genuine and proper, derived from the nature of *diſtributive Juſtice*, which requires a man to do his *Utmoſt* to repair the *injuries* he has done to any; this is ſo ſtated a *rule*, that all our *Caſuiſts* juſtly preſs it in all caſes of damage: But are there not many of them, who while they ſo eagerly aſſert that *obligation* in other mens caſes, do as *David* did in the matter of the poor mans Lamb, ſeverely ſentence that *injuſtice*, whereof *themſelves* are more highly Guilty? To every ſuch I would ſpeak in the words of *Nathan*, and ſay, *thou art the Man*. Alas, ſhall every little *triſle* I purloin from my Neighbour have *weight* enough to ſink me to the *abyſſe*; and ſhall *theſts* of the greateſt magnitude, the

the robbing God of his *honour*, the Church not only of her *Patrimony*, but her *Peace*, and the World of thoſe ineſtimable *benefits*, which from a uniform conſonant Chriſtianity were to have been tranſmitted to it? Shall theſe I ſay be ſo ſlight and inconſiderable, as not to hinder his aſcent to the hill of the Lord? Shall the leaſt *violence* I offer to the perſon of an Enemy oblige me to *ſatisfaction*, and ſhall he rend and tear the *body* of his Saviour (who willingly expos'd his *natural* body only in tenderneſs to that *myſtical* one, which is thus violated) and ſhall this criminous *barbarity* exact no offers towards amends? Certainly no man can have *partiality* enough to think it, and if he do not, he is to remember *himſelf* indiſpenſably engag'd to take the ſame *courſe* he preſcribes to *others*, and with his utmoſt *induſtry* endeavour to repair the *injury* he has done.

AND O that we might ſee this ſo eſſential a piece of *Juſtice* aſſum'd among us, that our impertinent *ſtrifes* might be ſuperſeded, and all moulded into the one noble *Emulation*, who ſhall faſteſt unravel his own *miſchiefs*, and promote that *peace* he has hitherto diſturb'd. This indeed were worthy to be the united deſign of all learned men; and were it once ſo, who knows how proſperous it might be: For though ſome *ſingle attempts* have miſcarried, yet probably one great *cauſe* why they do ſo, was becauſe they were *ſingle*. When one Perſon comes with *pacifick arguments* to part an *enraged multitude*, let his Reaſons be never ſo convincing, they are not like to be much adverted

adverted to; the only *effect* is, that he who deſign'd himſelf the common *Friend*, is taken as the common *Enemy*; but where many aſſociate in ſuch a deſign, and make a party for peace, their *numbers* give a conſiderableneſs to their *propoſal*, and prepare for their *ſucceſs*. And were there ſuch a *combination* in order to the Churches Quiet, it were more than poſſible they might undermine the *contrary attempts* of Faction and Diſcord.

AND why ſhould not every man be *ambitious* to make one in this ſo *pious a confederacy*, and reſolve moſt ſtudiouſly to endeavour the *compoſing* the Diſtractions of the Church, in which they may borrow ſomething of *inſtruction* even from their paſt guilts, and copy out their own *induſtry* to this better purpoſe. This is ſure; our *diſputes* had never ſo multiplied, had there not been a great deal of *unhappy diligence* in nouriſhing the ſeeds of them: Every *controverted Tenet* has been heightned and improved, till it have ſpawn'd a *numerous brood*, ſo that thoſe who at firſt *differ'd*, perhaps but in ſome *few* things, wrangle on, till at laſt they *agree* in *fewer*: Now were the like Induſtry applied the *other way*, it might ſure do much to the changing the *whole Scene*. If men would as nicely obſerve the Principles of *agreement* between *diſſenting parties*, and with as much Art and Care ſeek to dilate and ſpread them; why might not they as much *overwhelm* our *Differences*, as they have been *overwhelmed* by them? 'Tis ſure that thoſe Univerſal *truths*, to which all Parties aſſent, are, as the *cleareſt* for their Evidence,

dence, ſo the moſt *important*, for their Conſequence: And why ſhould not *theſe*, if rightly managed, be a more enforcing *motive* to Unity, than the more *ſingular opinions* (perhaps phancies) of ſome men, can be to Diſcord? Certainly would but our *Moſes*'s try what this *rod* of *God* in their hand could do, they would find it able to devour all *thoſe* of the *Magicians*. Would they like *Benhadads* Ambaſſadors, catch hold of every amicable *expreſſion*, any thing that looks towards *Peace*, and cloſe in with it, they might probably ſee *Effects*, beyond what can at diſtance be expected. For ſure *Peace* is not ſuch a *dry Tree*, ſuch a Sapleſs unfertile thing, but that it might *fructifie* and *encreaſe* as well as *Diſcord*, were there a juſt care taken to cheriſh and nouriſh it.

INDEED this Deſign is the only *Amulet* which can render it ſafe to look into *controverſies*, which are elſe apt to infuſe a kind of *acrimony*, and *venome* into mens ſpirits; For we ſee many, whoſe *curioſity* at firſt brought them as unconcern'd *ſpectators*, do within a while engage with all earneſtneſs in the *conteſt*: but thoſe who ſtudy differences only with an aim of compoſing them, theſe have their thoughts determin'd and fixt, and ſo not left looſe to the enticements of any Party. *Ariſtotle* ſays that on the Hill *Olympus* the Air is ſo ſubtile and piercing, that thoſe who aſcend thither, are forced to carry with them *wet Spunges*, by that *moiſture* ſomewhat to allay that extreme *tenuity* which otherwiſe would be deadly; and ſure they that deal in *controverſies*,

live in no leſs *corroſive an Air*, and therefore had need make the like proviſion, and carry with them this *Pacifick purpoſe*, as a *Lenitive* and *Emollient* againſt the infectious *ſharpneſs* they will there meet with.

AND now how bleſſed a thing were it, if we could once thus follow the things that make for Peace, that the *numberleſs mutual enmities* which are now among us, may all be reduced into *one*, that we may fight not againſt *ſingle Adverſaries*, but againſt *War* itſelf, and contend againſt *nothing* but *contention*. And ſure our victory here were worth millions of thoſe petty conqueſts wherewith men pleaſe themſelves, and which acquire them ſo little of real advantage, that the ſame account which was given of *Otho* and *Vitellius*, that the *war* would ſwallow up the one, and the *victory* the other, is too applicable to our *combatants*, who are like to be equally unhappy in *defeat* or *ſucceſs*. The *Spartans* had an Order that when any of their *Generals* had compaſſed his Deſign by *policy* or *treaty*, he ſhould ſacrifice an *Oxe*, but when by *force* and *bloudſhed*, a *Cock* only: from the diſtant values of which oblations, *Plutarch* obſerves how much they preferr'd the Atchievements of calm and ſober *counſels*, before thoſe of *ſtrength* and *power*: but ſure the diſparity is more eminent in the preſent inſtance, where if we *fight* we *wound* our Brethren, but if we *unite* we *deſtroy* our Enemy; baffle and circumvent *Satans* Maſter-ſtratagem, and not only *worſt* but *outwit* him. Indeed this

this and this only is worth our Induſtry, whereas thoſe *little defeats* we give Each other, are like *thoſe* in a civil War, wherein the *publick* is ſtill ſure to be a *Loſer*; upon which conſideration the *Romans* allowed not their Captains to triumph for ſuch Victories; and ſure our *Chriſtianity is* very ill beſtowed on us, if it have made us ſo much worſe natur'd, as to chuſe thoſe ruinous Conqueſts *at home*, before the moſt glorious and profitable ones *abroad*.

'TWAS *Abner's* admonition to *Joab*, when he was in a hot purſuit of the *Iſraelites*, 2 *Sam.* 2. 26. *Shall the ſword devour for ever? knoweſt thou not that it will be bitterneſs in the latter end?* And ſure 'tis more than time for our Leaders to make the ſame reflection, and as *Joab* did there, call back the People from following their Brethren: Nay indeed, would they but attend, they might hear themſelves called back; the *great Captain* of their Salvation ſounding a *retreat* from theſe fatal skirmiſhes. *Xenophon* in the inſtitution of *Cyrus* tells us of one *Cryſanthus*, who in the heat of battel had his hand lift up to *ſtrike* an Enemy, but hearing in the very inſtant the Trumpet ſound a *retreat*, *ſtopt* his blow. A great ſobriety of *courage* ſo to ſhew more Zeal to the *obeying* his General, than the *annoying* his Enemy; and an Inſtance of much *reproach* to our *Spiritual Combatants*, who have ſhewed themſelves ſo much worſe diſciplin'd, as in ſpight of daily repeated *calls* to Peace, ſtill to *purſue* their Hoſtility: But ſure ſuch an *inſolence* is ſo inconſiſtent with the

pretence they make of fighting Gods Battels, that they muſt either *reform* the one, or *diſclaim* the other.

AND now if after all that hath or can be ſaid of the *obligation, neceſſity* or *advantages* of Peace, we are put to the Pſalmiſts Complaint, *That there are ſtill thoſe that will make them ready to battel*: if men are of ſo untreatable a Temper, that nothing can be obtain'd of them; what remains for thoſe that are Peaceable and Faithful in *Iſrael*, but to *bewail* thoſe Miſchiefs they cannot *redreſs*? If the Church muſt periſh, at leaſt to give her Funeral rites, and if they cannot quench her *flames*, yet to bedew her *aſhes* with their *tears*. 'Tis true, we cannot yet ſay ſhe is quite *dead*; but though ſhe *breaths* yet in a few pious peaceful Souls, yet like a *Palſied perſon*, ſhe ſcarce *moves* a Limb, ſhe wants vigour to actuate the generality of her profeſſors, and remains rather a *trunk* than a *body*: and ſure if there be truth in that Phyſical Aphoriſm, which ſays, That *diſeaſes which croſs the temper and conſtitution of the Patient are moſt dangerous*; we may well conclude her *deſperate*, there being nothing more repugning to the very Elements and Principles of her Being, than thoſe contentions under which ſhe now *groans*.

YET there is an *omnipotent Power* to whom no Difficulties are inſuperable, an *unerring Phyſician* who makes the moſt hopeleſs Diſeaſes, but the Triumph of his Art. O let us reſort to him, and invite his Aids in the ſame pathetick form where-

wherewith he was ſolicited for *Lazarus*, *Jo.* 11. 3. *Lord, behold ſhe whom thou loveſt is ſick*: She for whoſe ſake thou enduredſt ſuch contradiction of *ſinners* againſt thy ſelf, is now by the contradiction of her own *Children*, languiſhing and expiring: ſhe for whom thou pouredſt out *thy bloud*, lies weltring in her *own*; Lord, ſave or ſhe periſheth: Were ſuch Petitions enforced and ingeminated by the daily breathing of humble devout hearts, who knows how prevalent they might be. In this ſenſe alſo *Heaven* might ſuffer *violence*; nor is there any better countermine to all the *outrages* acted upon Earth than by making them thus reverberate in our *cries* and *prayers*.

AND perhaps *this* Conſideration will draw us all, even the moſt *peaceful* of us into the *guilt* of a negative Acceſſarineſs to the preſent Miſchiefs. There are divers that diſlike our *contentions*, and blame the *abettors*; but yet with ſuch Unconcern'dneſs and Indifferency, as that wherewith we commonly talk of the *combuſtions* of foreign States, wherein we rather expreſs our *Judgment* than our *reſentments*, and do make it more our *diſcourſe* than our *concern*. And even of thoſe who have in ſome degree laid it to heart, who is there that has not been ſome way wanting in the ardency, or frequency of his interceſſions? Let every one ſeriouſly interrogate his own Heart, and I fear 'twill witneſs to him, that his own *private concerns* are much apter to excite his *devotions*. Let us remember with what *paſſion* and

importunity we invoke God in our particular Exigents, and conſider whether *we* are equally affected with *thoſe* of the Church: Haſt thou been like *Hezekiah*, ſick unto death? And haſt thou with him wept ſore, and vehemently ſolicited a recovery? Has thy *eſtate* been invaded by Oppreſſion, thy *fame* by Slander and Detraction? And haſt thou with loud and earneſt cries, appealed to that *God to whom vengeance belongs*? Or haſt thou been in that condition which is proverbial for ſetting men to their prayers? Haſt thou like *Jonas* been in a ſtorm, in minutely expectation of being ſwallowed up by the *waves*, if not the *Whale*; and in this Extaſie of fear, when as *thy ſoul was*, as the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks, *even melted away becauſe of the Trouble*, haſt cried unto the Lord, and even out-nois'd the billows in thy clamorous importunities for aid? Haſt thou in all, or any of theſe eſtates been thus affected for thy ſelf? Then remember whether thy *reſentments* have been proportionable for *that* which is much better than thy ſelf: If the no leſs imminent and preſſing *dangers* of the Church, have not as much awakened thy *fervor*, given as ſharp and piercing an *accent* to thy Prayers, thou muſt needs confeſs, thou haſt faln ſhort of what thou ſhouldeſt and mighteſt have done towards her reſcue.

AND if this Inquiſition be *impartially* made, who among us can plead *not guilty*? And therefore in reflections upon our paſt omiſſions, we are *in juſtice* oblig'd to redouble our *Zeal*, to ſay over again our *Tepid heartleſs prayers*, and inflame

flame them with a *Coal* from the Altar; an earneſt affectionate Concern for all that is holy, ſuch as may prompt us to cry, and that mightily to God: We ſee the *Ninevites* could do it when there was no viſible approach of *danger*, but merely upon the *preſage* of a ſtranger Prophet, backt with the *conſciouſneſs* of their own Guilt: I fear we more than equal them in the *latter* Motive, I am ſure we far exceed them as to the *former*. The *miſeries* we are to deprecate being not only under denunciation and threat, but actually upon us, though withal ſo improvable, that after all the *black Catalogue* our Experience brings in, our Fears meet us with the *bottomleſs Prophetick menace*, Eſay 5. 25. *for all this his Anger is not turn'd away, but his hand is ſtretched out ſtill.* 'Tis the uſual Oeconomy of divine Juſtice to make our *Crimes* our *Puniſhment*, and to give us up to *thoſe ills*, which were at firſt, our own *depraved choice*: and God knows we have too much reaſon to fear this may be our caſe: That we who have ſo perverſly violated all the *bands* of Unity, wantonly wrangled our ſelves out of all *inclinations* to Peace, ſhould never be able to reſume them; that all thoſe *gentle breathings* of Grace, by which *exaſperated Paſſions* are to be cool'd and tempered, ſhould be withdrawn, and we finally be given up to be diſſipated by thoſe Whirl-winds our ſelves have rais'd: That *Chriſtianity* which we have made the ſtale and Property to our irregular *appetites*, us'd only as *fig-leaves* to hide our *ſhame*, ſhould wither and ſhrink

into nothing; and that *we* who could not agree in what manner to *retain* it, ſhould at laſt too well agree to *renounce* it.

THIS alas, as it is the *fearfulleſt*, ſo is it the *probableſt* Iſſue of our wild Contentions, ſuch as nothing but the miraculous Effluxes of divine *Clemency* can avert. O let us with all the *groans* and *tears*, ſo deplor'd a Condition exacts, addreſs thither, importune the *father of Mercies* to pity *us*, who know not how to pity *our ſelves*, and that though we have caſt off *all bowels*, yet that we may find them all concenter'd *in him*: that he will heal our *wounds*; and which of all others is the moſt deſperate, our *unwillingneſs* to be healed: that the *Spirit of Peace* may overſhadow us, and impreſs on us the *dove-like qualities* of Meekneſs and Gentleneſs: that he would reſcue our Religion from our Profanation, not by taking *it* from Us, but by conforming *us* to It: Finally that he would do for us, not only above what we can *ask* or *think*, but beyond what we would *wiſh* or *chuſe*, and not ſuffer us to *acquire* the Miſeries we ſo eagerly *purſue*.

THIS *divine interpoſition* alone is it that can poſſibly ſecure us, and indeed the ſuit amounts to no leſs, than that he will *force* upon us the Bleſſing we *reſiſt*, and do us good againſt our wills, which is ſo bold a *requeſt*, that they had need be more than ordinary Favourites that ſhall prefer it. Thoſe *hands* muſt be very pure, that are lift up in ſuch an *interceſſion*: and therefore all that undertake it are obliged to qualifie themſelves for

for it, by purging out not only the *leven* of Malice and Strife, but all other *filthineſs* of the Fleſh and Spirit: without This, we can never approve our ſelves to intercede in earneſt; for what can be more ridiculous than to deprecate the *ruine* of Chriſtianity by the *contentions* of other men; when our ſelves contrive it by ſome other vice of our own? This is not to deſire it ſhould *live*, but that none but we ſhould *kill* it. 'Twill therefore concern thoſe who wiſh the *Peace* of the Church, to examine whether they do as much project for her *Purity*; otherwiſe 'tis a mockery to pretend ſuch a *jealous tenderneſs* for her. We have ſeen there are more ways than one, by which Chriſtian practice may be evacuated, and it matters little from whence that Wind blows that ſhip-wracks our Piety. Yet 'tis not to be denied that of all thoſe *tempeſtuous blaſts*, this of our *contentions* is the roughest and moſt fatal. 'Tis indeed not a ſingle guſt, but an encounter and ſtruggling of ſeveral contrary winds; and God knows no *poetical deſcription* can out-doe the *horror* of the ſtorms they have rais'd; yet for ought I diſcern, there is nothing that is leſs vulgarly accuſed, which I muſt account to the Reader, as the *cauſe* why I have detain'd him ſo long upon this Head; and given it a *length* ſo unproportionable to the *preceding* parts of this Diſcourſe.

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.

The Close.

WE *have now seen the unhappy riddle of the* Unchristianness *of Christians unfolded, have observ'd the* Originals *and* Causes *of That which is too notorious to all the world in its* Effects. *And though in this cursory view the* Reader *is not to think he has any such* complete discovery, *as should supersede his own* farther inquisition, *yet as it may serve to* awaken, *so somewhat to* assist *his Industry, give him some light and insight into the wiles of Satan: and by branding some of the chief of those* cheats *which have robb'd us of our* Piety, *prepare for the detection of the* whole Confederacy: *in the interim this* Specimen *may serve to stop his wonder at the* ruinous estate *of Christianity, for though 'tis true that it was compacted of all the most* incorruptible materials, *had all the* harmony *of parts which the most exact* Frame *and* Composure *could give it, and so was qualified both for* strength *and* beauty, *to have defied all the* injuries *of Time; yet while she has so many* Undermi-ners, *'tis not strange to see her in the* dust, *there being no* one *of these, especially that I last insisted on, which has not destructive* efficacy *enough; first to* deface, *and then to* ruine *her.*

BUT *it is but an unprofitable acquest to know the* Authors *of our mischiefs if we stop there, this enquiry being matter not of mere* Curiosity, *but of the near-*

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eſt and moſt preſſing Intereſt: *we ſearch not after Malefactors for their* acquaintance, *but for their* puniſhment, *and our own* ſecurity; *and all our diſcoveries of this kind are vain, if we apply them not to that purpoſe. Let me therefore conclude with this* earneſt Petition *to the Reader, That he will not to all the* native *Defects of this* diſcourſe, *add this* accidental *one, that it ſhall be perfectly* impertinent; *a mere waſte of his Time and my own; which it will inevitably* prove, *if it engage him not in an* earneſt proſecution *of thoſe* Delinquents *it hath impeacht; and in as earneſt an endeavour to repair the* Miſchiefs *they have wrought.*

IN ſhort, let every man depoſit what he has here read, not with his memory *only, but his* conſcience, *let him there ſeriouſly ponder the Excellency of that* holy vocation, *as S.* Paul *terms it,* Eph. 4. 1. to which he is call'd: *and then as ſeriouſly conſider,* whether he have, *as the Apoſtle there exhorts,* walked worthy of it; *if he find he have not (as alas, who is there that has?) Let him ſearch out as the* particulars, *ſo the* cauſes *of his Miſcarriages: diligently ſift out thoſe Fallacies of* Satan, *or his own* heart; *thoſe ſly Deluſions which have made him act thus prepoſterouſly againſt all the Convictions of common* reaſon, *natural* conſcience, *or Chriſtian* experience; *and when he has diſcovered, let him make no delay to reſcue himſelf from their* Treacheries, *but manfully break thoſe* withs *and* cords (*which are too weak to hold any that will but in earneſt remember, he is a* Nazarite, *a Perſon conſecrate to God*) *reſolute-*

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ly resist the insidious caresses *of those* Dalilah's, *which will deliver not* Himself *only, but the* Ark *to the* Philistines. *Nor is he to content himself with his own* single escape, *but to propagate the* deliverance *to as many as he can; let him blazon and stigmatize those* Impostors (*for 'tis a* combining *with them to* conceal *them*) *warn and caution* others *against those jugling Artifices, by which* himself *was entrapped, and make his own ship-wracks a* Sea-mark *for the securing the course of other Passengers. This is the* Effect *of Christs admonition to S.* Peter, when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren; *and a piece of that Fraternal charity we all owe to every particular Soul, to whom we have opportunity to dispence it.*

BUT besides that private *Obligation, it becomes a duty upon a higher, and more* publick *Account, it being the only way to take off that* Scandal *we have brought upon our* Religion; *which as it was not contracted by the* irregularities *of one or two persons, but by associated and* common crimes; *so neither will it be removed by a few single, and private* Reformations; *there must be combinations, and publick* Confederacies *in* Vertue, *to ballance and counterpoise those of* Vice, *or she will never recover that pristine honour which she acquired by the general Piety of her Professors, In those primitive days there was such an abhorrence of all that was Ill, that a* vicious person *was lookt on as a kind of* Monster *or* Prodigie, *and like a putrified Member cut off, as being not only* dangerous, *but* noisome *to the Body: but alas, the Scene is so chang'd, that*

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the Church *is now made up of* ſuch *as ſhe would then have* caſt out; *and 'tis now as remarkable an Occurrent to find a* good *Chriſtian, as it was there to ſee a* bad: *and ſince every thing is eſtimated not according to its rare and caſual, but frequent uſual Operations, 'tis eaſie to conclude, that* Chriſtianity *has loſt as much in its* Repute, *as it appears to have done in its* Efficacy: *nor will there be any way of repairing it, till We be generally rendred ſo malleable to its* impreſſions, *that our Lives may atteſt its* Force *and* Energy.

NAY indeed 'tis not only its honour, *but its* being *is concern'd in it, active Principles ceaſe to* be *when they ceaſe to* act. *You cannot hinder the fire to burn but by putting it out: and to* ſuppreſs *the Operation of our* Religion *is indeed to* extinguiſh *it; at leaſt to deprive it of its proper and ſpecifick act: ſo that if it can be ſaid to be; 'tis only by that abuſe of ſpeech which calls a dead or painted man, a Man: It may perhaps be a* vizor *for the Hypocrite, a* Stale *for the Ambitious, a* waſh *or* tincture *for the Covetous; but where it is* theſe, *it ceaſes to be* itſelf. *The* eſſence *and* being *of Chriſtianity is* practice; *and according to that Teſt and proof thereof, where almoſt can it be ſaid to Exiſt in the world? We have indeed ſome images and ſhadows of it: Some have taken its* picture, *but the* ſubſtance *and* ſolid body *is vaniſhed, reſolv'd into Air, and ſeems ſadly to have moraliz'd the poetick Fable of* Sybills *being worn into a voice,* we have turn'd it into a mere noiſe and ſound; *nay, which is worſe, into an* Echo, *that flattering complying voice, which*

which reverberates every mans own language to him: Men dictate to their Religion, *and then will needs perſwade themſelves and others, that their Religion dictates to* them, *will have the* rebounds *of their own Fancy or Luſt paſs for Divine* Oracles; *ſo ſuborning this Aiery fantaſtick Chriſtianity to legitimate thoſe practices, which the real ſolid one forbids and Execrates.*

TO this diſmal forlorn eſtate have we brought that which was deſigned to bring us to bliſs, herein far exceeding the barbarity of the brutiſh Sodomites, *they would have violated the Meſſengers of their* ruine, *but we thoſe of our* ſafety: *We having not only neglected, but vilified and reproacht the* Embaſſy *ſent us from* Heaven, *and inſtead of* embracing *that purity and peace it recommended to us, have done our Parts to make it* forgotten *that ever it was ſent upon any ſuch Errand; and indeed ſo it is like to be, if ſome* Heroick piety *do not revive its* Memory, *and teach us to record it not ſo much in our* books *as* lives: *There, and there only it will be univerſally legible, there it would indeed appear, what it is in its own nature,* the power of God unto Salvation.

AND now why ſhould we not all Emulouſly contend, who ſhall firſt put off that ugly vizor *we have put upon our Religion, and reſtore it to its* native form; *eſpecially conſidering that with its* Beauty *we loſe its* Dowry *too; forfeit all thoſe glorious* Rewards *which it promiſes to them that preſerve it* immaculate. *'Tis only a* pure and undefiled Religion *that will inveſt us in thoſe* white robes, *wherein*

we

we are to follow the Lamb. *And ſure thoſe who have here endeavoured to* darken *and* extinguiſh *all the rays of Spiritual Light, that have lived as if they profeſt Chriſtianity merely in ſpight to* defame *it, muſt never hope it ſhall bring them to* ſhine as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father, *or procure them the* reward *of blameleſs Souls. No, it promiſes no other* Crown *than that of* Righteouſneſs, *and therefore they that want the* Righteouſneſs *muſt want the* Crown *alſo: Nay, beſides that ſo ineſtimable a Reverſion, they loſe all thoſe* preſent Joys *and* ſatisfactions *which true Chriſtian practice would afford them, and which both in reſpect of the* intenſ-neſs *and* duration, *infinitely exceed the moſt* profuſe ſenſualities *the World ever taſted.*

THESE are intereſts that are ſure Important enough, and yet we muſt be woed *to conſider them, nay, that does not prevail neither, but with a perverſe Coyneſs we* hold off; *all the ſolicitations and importunate* Calls *of God are lookt upon as* Artifices *and* Deſigns, *as if he had ſome Ends of his own to ſerve upon us, and (as the* Corinthians *ſuſpected St.* Paul) *meant to make a gain of us; we treat with him as if he were the Perſon to be advantaged, and barter for* Heaven *with ſuch an Indifference, as if* It *would want Us more than* We It; *never conſidering that 'tis impoſſible for him to have any other* Concern, *than that which his* Compaſſion *to us creates, and the more* earneſt *and* paſſionate *That is, the more it ſhould excite our own* care, *it being the Extremeſt degree of perverſe Folly, to* abandon *and* deſpiſe *our own Intereſt merely becauſe a Friend or Patron*

Patron considers *and* prizes *it. And this* brand *must lye upon every one of us, who still refuse to discern* the things that belong to our Peace, *after God has done so much to render them not only* visible *but* attainable.

WHAT shall I say more, but conclude with Christs passionate wish, *that* we might in this our days, understand the things that belong to our Peace, *and O that the* Spirit *of Peace and Light would descend among us, illuminate us with that true* practical Wisdom, *which may convince us, that our* Duty *and* Interest *are the same thing under several forms, and that while we impiously cast off the* one, *we do as foolishly betray the* other. *That so those* inestimable advantages *our Christianity gives towards both, may not be thus madly lost, serve only* as a price in the hand of a Fool, who hath no heart to it, *Prov.* 17. *And to this end let us humbly and earnestly invoke the Father of lights, to* illuminate *all those whom the God of this world hath* blinded, *that after he hath sent into the world the* Image *of his own eternal brightness; caused the* Sun of Righteousness *so long to shine upon us, it may not serve only to involve us in that most* dreadful condemnation, *which awaits those who love* darkness *more than* light; *but that answering the purpose of our* holy calling, *walking as* Children of light, *we may vindicate that* Christian profession *which we have so defamed, secure to our selves the light of* Gods countenance *here, and that of his* glory *hereafter.*

FINIS.

PRIVATE
DEVOTIONS,
REFERRING
To the ſeveral parts of the before-going Treatiſe.

TO THE READER.

IT is to be hoped that as this Treatiſe has entertain'd many; it has alſo had an effect much more deſirable, though leſs comprehenſive, to mend and convince ſome. And whilſt it gave an account of the general DECAY OF CHRISTIAN PIETY *in the* preſent *Age; has alſo invited a few at leaſt, to its purſuit and ſervice. Upon theſe hopes the* Author *has been perſwaded to add this ſhort* Specimen *of* PRIVATE DEVOTIONS, *that if the ſober and conſidering Reader ſhall find at any time his heart toucht and ſoftned, he may have in readineſs wherewith to actuate his holy flames, and aſſiſt him in his addreſſes to the Throne of Grace.*

PRIVATE DEVOTIONS

Referring to the ſeveral parts of the before-going Treatiſe.

O BLESSED Lord, who art infinitely holy and happy in thy ſelf, and from whom alone we derive the poſſibilities of being either; we proſtrate our ſelves before thee, in an humble adoration of thy abundant goodneſs, and a juſt confuſion at our own deteſtable ingratitude: we were aliens and enemies to thee by our corrupt affections, and ungodly works, yet even to us haſt thou been reconciled, nay bought the attonement with the precious bloud of thy dear Son: thou haſt ſent him to be the propitiation for our ſins; and (which is no leſs mercy) to be the ſubduer of them too, ſenteſt him by his divine Example and admirable Precepts, to bleſs us in turning every one of us from his iniquities. Thou haſt given us a Law ſo perfect, ſo excellent, as renders our obediences their own reward, and yet ſuperaddeſt alſo an eternal weight of glory to be its future retribution: and leſt our brutal temper ſhould not be attracted by all this, thou haſt hedg'd up our way with thorns, annext a preſent uneaſineſs, and

and ſubſequent danger to our deviations, ſo by the menaces of Hell eſſaying to fright us into Heaven: and to actuate and enliven all theſe methods, thou addeſt the internal aſſiſtances of thy Grace and Spirit to excite us to good, to reſtrain and avert us from ill, and finally advance us to the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt. And now, O Lord, after all theſe obligations, all theſe aids, what manner of perſons ought we to be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs? But alas, to our eternal reproach, we have ſignaliz'd our ſelves by contrary practice; blaſphem'd that holy Name whereby we are call'd, and by our enormous lives, ſcandaliz'd our profeſſion, and made it as eminent for vice, as it ſhould have been (and once was) for vertue. Our knowledge of thy will ſerves only to inform us, wherein we may moſt oppoſe it; and while we call our ſelves Chriſtians, we commit ſuch things as are not ſo much as named among the Gentiles. Nay, O Lord, ſo little do we retain of the power of Godlineſs, that the greateſt part of Men have now caſt off the very form, deny the Lord that bought them, trample upon all that is ſacred; and not only think, but loudly ſay there is no God. Thus inſtead of regulating our manners by our faith, we model our faith by our manners, and reap nothing by our Chriſtianity, but the guilt of Apoſtacy, and the fearful expectation of that fiery indignation which awaits thoſe who have thus trampled under foot the Son of God, and done deſpight to the Spirit of Grace.

And now, O Lord, when the foundations are caſt down, what can the righteous do? What counterpoiſe can the groans and tears of thoſe few who mourn in *Sion* be to ſuch general, ſuch daring impieties? Yet O God, thou haſt in all ages ſtrangely condeſcended to the interceſſion of thy Servants. O Bow thy Heaven again and come down, and hear the prayers of thoſe who deſire to fear thy name: and let them not only deliver their own Souls, but obtain mercy for this perverſe generation, even ſuch a mighty grace as may yet reduce us. O thou who didſt at firſt call us out of Darkneſs into thy marvellous light, recall us now from that worſe darkneſs, wherein we have involved our ſelves, put thy Laws a-new in our hearts, and write them in our minds: And after ſo many Years, ſo many Ages of being call'd Chriſtians, let us at laſt begin to be ſo. Revive, O Lord, that Primitive zeal and ſanctity, which may purifie us to thy ſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works. And O thou bleſſed Mediator, who prayedſt for thy firſt crucifiers, intercede alſo for us, who have under the name of Diſciples crucified thee afreſh: and though we have nothing to ſay for our ſelves, cannot pretend that we knew not what we did; yet let thy ſtripes and wounds, thy croſs and paſſion plead for us. Thou didſt once lead captivity captive, O ſtir up thy ſtrength again, and let not Satan now triumph in thy ſpoils, and deſecrate thy Church which thou haſt purchaſed with thine own bloud. O

let

let thy bleſſed Spirit breath again upon us, that even theſe dry bones may live in thy ſight: let him ſo effectually convince and reprove, illuminate and excite us, that we may cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, walk worthy of that holy vocation wherewith we are called, and be capable of thoſe glorious rewards which are prepar'd for thoſe who fight a good fight, finiſh their courſe, and keep the Faith: where we ſhall ceaſe to grieve, to ſuffer and to ſin; but never ceaſe to live and to be happy: ſinging perpetual *Hallelujahs* to him that ſits upon the Throne, to the holy Spirit, and to the Lamb for evermore. *Amen.*

A LITANY.

O GOD the Father of Heaven, the God of Angels and of Men, the Father of compaſſions, of conſolation and life;

Have mercy upon us miſerable ſinners.

O God the Son, the Eternal welbeloved Son, by whom the ſinful race of Men become the Sons of God;

Have mercy upon us, &c.

O God the Holy Ghoſt, the ſpirit of comfort, of holineſs and grace, by whom we receive the Adoption, and the earneſt of our hope;

Have mercy upon us, &c.

O holy, bleſſed and glorious Trinity, diſtinguiſht as in Perſon, ſo in the various diſpenſati-

ons of the work of our Redemption; united as in Eſſence, ſo in the Acts of kindneſs and compaſſion to Men;

Have mercy upon us, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to create in us clean hearts, and to renew a right ſpirit within us, to reſcue us from all the deceits of the World, the Devil and our own Hearts.

We beſeech thee to hear us good Lord.

That it may pleaſe thee to grant that all who have been baptiz'd into Chriſt, may indeed put on Chriſt; ſeriouſly weigh, and induſtriouſly anſwer the obligation of their holy calling; not reſt in the form and outſide of Religion, whilſt by a retchleſs inconſideration they enervate the power and efficacy thereof.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee ſo to guid our conſideration, that we do not thereby more enſnare our ſelves, entertain thoſe deluſions which flatter us with hopes of reward, without performing duty, but that by an impartial advertency to all thy ſacred dictates; we may be engag'd to a conſtant, entire obedience, and work out our ſalvation with fear and trembling.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to open our Eyes that we may ſee the wondrous things of thy Law, to convince us that it is holy, juſt and good, ſweeter than hony and the hony-comb, and that all our objections to it ariſe only from our being carnal and ſold under ſin.

We

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to remove all our carnal prejudices, and vicious prepoſſeſſions; and to enable us to meaſure thy precepts by the rules of right reaſon, and an illuminated conſcience according to the analogy of thy holy faith once delivered to the Saints.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to inſpirit us by thy grace, that we may not only approve, but obey thy commands, conquer all the diſcouragements of ſloth or vice, and chearfully ſet to the practice of Chriſtian duty, that ſo we may experimentally find how ſweet the Lord is.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to put thy fear in our hearts, that we never depart from thee, but equally obey thee in all things, not indulging to any favourite ſin, but entirely reſign and captivate every thought to the obedience of Chriſt.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to take theſe ſtony hearts out of us, and to give us hearts of Fleſh; ſuch as may melt at the apprehenſion of our ſins and thy diſpleaſure.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to endue us with a right judgment, that we deceive not our ſelves with ſhews and formalities of repentance; but bring forth indeed fruits meet for it.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to awake us from our

ſupine and dangerous dependance on a future repentance, and make us in this our day diſcern and embrace the things belonging to our Peace, ſo anſwering thy preſent calls, that we may not at laſt call when thou ſhalt only laugh at our calamity, and mock when our fear cometh.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to poſſeſs our ſouls with a juſt reverence, and right apprehenſions of thy eſſence and attributes, that we may not form our belief of thee by our own phancies or wiſhes, but by thoſe revelations thou haſt given of thy ſelf in thy word.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to reſtrain our bold Curioſity in prying into thy counſels and decrees, and make us wiſe unto Sobriety, reſerving ſecret things unto the Lord our God, and ſtudying the revealed ones for the regulating of our lives.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to give us ſuch an awe of thy juſtice, that we may fear to provoke it, not expecting thou ſhouldeſt repent of thy judgments, when we do not of our ſins, nor phancying that any milder vengeance attends our final obſtinacy than unquenchable fire.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to grant us ſuch a ſenſe of thy mercy, that we may never ſay there is no hope, or excuſe our incorrigibleneſs by our deſperation, but that the goodneſs of God may lead

lead us to repentance, yet let us never ſo preſume on it, as to ſin that Grace may abound.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to enable us with all due regard to obſerve, and humility to adore, the diſpenſations of thy Providence, not pretending to fathom thy ſecret intendments, but endeavouring ſo to comply with all ſignal diſcoveries of thy purpoſes towards us, that what thou deſigneſt for our wealth, may not be to us an occaſion of falling.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee, that from every event, whether National or Perſonal, we may ſtill infer the obligation and neceſſity of turning from our ſins; that gratitude for paſt mercies may allure us to good, and fear of impending Judgments may drive us from evil.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to inſpire the univerſal Church with the Spirit of Truth, Unity and Concord, that there may be no diviſions among us; but that we may be perfectly joyn'd together, in the ſame mind, and in the ſame judgment.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee, whereinſoever any are contrary minded, to reveal thy truth to them; and in the interim ſo to allay thoſe heats our differences have caus'd, that amidſt the diverſities of judgment, we may keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace.

We beſeech thee, &c. That

That it may pleaſe thee to deliver us from all the unhappy effects of our contentions, and to purge us from all the criminous cauſes of them, and ſo to heal our breaches, that *Jeruſalem* may again become a City at unity in itſelf.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to grant that we no longer dote about queſtions, and ſtrifes of words whereof cometh Envy, Railing, evil Surmiſes; but ſo buſie our ſelves in practick duties, that we may not fear when our Lord comes to be found ſo doing.

We beſeech thee, &c.

Son of God we beſeech thee to hear us

O Lamb of God that takeſt away the ſins of the world;

Grant us thy Peace.

O Lamb of God that takeſt away the ſins of the world;

Have mercy upon us.

O Chriſt hear us.

Lord have mercy upon us.
Chriſt have mercy upon us.
Lord have mercy upon us.

OUR *Father which art in Heaven; Hallowed be thy Name,* &c.

O Lord deal not with us after our Sins.
Neither reward us after our Iniquities.

Almighty

ALmighty God, who ſheweſt to them that be in Error the light of thy truth, to the intent that they may return to the way of righteouſneſs: grant unto all them that be admitted to the fellowſhip of Chriſts Religion, that they may eſchew thoſe things which be contrary to their profeſſion, and follow all ſuch things as are agreeable to the ſame, through *Jeſus* Chriſt our Lord.

O Merciful Saviour, who ſo lovedſt thy Church, as to give thy ſelf for her, look again on her with thy compaſſionate eyes, who now needs a ſecond redemption, even a reſcue from her ſelf, from the unnatural iſſue of her own bowels. Lord thou ſeeſt the miſerable ſtate to which ſhe is reduced, by our wild contentions, that ſhe has at once loſt her purity, and her peace, and is become an *Acheldema*, a field of bloud. Lord where is thy pity and the ſounding of thy bowels towards her, are they reſtrained? O remember thy old loving kindneſs, the love of thy eſpouſals, and as thou wert once a Lamb to expiate her guilts, ſo be thou now a Lion to vindicate her wrongs; ſtrike a dread into the hearts of all, who have contributed to her ruine, and make them know that who ſo touches her, toucheth the apple of thine Eye. O let not her ſtill ſink under the oppreſſion of our ſordid deſigns, and irregular appetites, nor be devoured by thoſe who pretend to guard her. Give her Paſtors after

ter thine own heart; let her Prieſts be cloath'd with righteouſneſs, and waſh their hands in innocence before they compaſs thine Altar. O let not any vain ambition for themſelves, make them expoſe and proſtitute the honour of their God: no affectation of that knowledge which puffeth up, divert them from that Charity which only edifieth: Grant that the intereſt of Religion may ſtill be uppermoſt in their hearts, and never vail to Secular ends, nor the pretence of truth cloak any exorbitant paſſion. Nay O Lord, refine even their Zeal, and make it ſevere to kindle, not conſume their Charity: and to inſpirit them with ſuch an unwearied induſtry, that they may always abound in the work of the Lord, diligently take heed to thoſe flocks, over whom the Holy Ghoſt has made them overſeers, never turning aſide to vain jangling, or ſtriving about words to no profit. And to all who are under their charge, give meekneſs to ſubmit, to thoſe who by thy appointment watch their Souls; ſuppreſs all prejudices and faction, and let none be puffed up for one againſt another, but grant that by a due attendance on their callings, both as men and Chriſtians, they may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godlineſs and honeſty. And Lord let both Prieſt and People ſo follow after the things that make for peace, that we may adorn the doctrine of our God and Saviour, take off the Scandal our diviſions have given to thoſe that are without, and again evidence our relation to the Prince of Peace: and O that our ways were made

made thus direct, but alas, how little diſpoſition have we toward it? This change muſt be only the work of that mighty power, which is able to ſubdue all things to itſelf: and yet O Lord, with what face can we beg of thee to force us to that happineſs, which we ſtill reſolve to reſiſt? What can we then ſay unto thee O thou preſerver, thou redeemer of men, who have put our ſelves beyond all the ordinary methods of thy grace? We can only lay our ſelves at thy feet; diſplay our miſery, and leave thee to conſider thine own compaſſion: O let that move thee to do for us whatever our wretched eſtate is in need of; O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, conſider and do it, if not for ours, yet for thy Names ſake: thou art *Jeſus* a Saviour, ſave thy people from their ſin, and let us not ſlide back by a perpetual backſliding; thou art the head of the Church, O abandon not thy body, careſt thou not that ſhe periſh? Turn thee again O Lord, renew her days as of old, ſanctifie and cleanſe her, that thou mayeſt again preſent her to thy ſelf a glorious Church, not having ſpot or wrinkle, and if ſhe muſt ſtill be militant, let it no longer be within her ſelf, but againſt ſpiritual wickedneſſes, the ruler of the darkneſs of this world; till at laſt thou utterly beat down Satan under her feet; and tranſlate her from this ſtate of warfare, to that of Triumph, and bliſs in the Kingdom of thy Father; which thou O bleſſed *Jeſus* haſt purchaſed with thy Blood, and ſealed by thy Spirit. To which bleſſed Trinity be aſcrib'd all praiſe, honour, and glory now and for ever. *Amen.* O

O MOST gracious Lord, who out of thy boundleſs compaſſion to thy creatures, art never wanting in any means that may draw them to thy ſelf, we the unworthieſt of them deſire to give glory to thee, in a hearty acknowledgment that thou haſt in a moſt eminent and peculiar manner abounded to us of this Nation, afforded us all the methods that might either force or allure us to obedience. Lord thou wert pleaſed to keep us many years under thy chaſtening hand, thou broughteſt us into the ſnare and laydſt trouble upon our loyns, and didſt at once upbraid and puniſh our voluntary ſlaveries to our own luſts, by giving us up a prey to thoſe of others: and when thoſe judgments which ſhould have melted, ſerv'd but to harden us; when we ſeemed emulous to have our ſins outvie thy Plagues, as they had before thy mercies, what could we then expect, but to find a judgement worthy of God? Such an irreverſible ruine, as might render us an hiſſing and aſtoniſhment to the whole Earth? But when we were thus ripened for thy greateſt ſeverity, then didſt thou O Lord prevent us with the bleſſings of thy goodneſs, miraculouſly interpoſe for our reſcue, and by ſuch undiſcernable ways return the captivity of our *Sion*, that we were deliver'd like them that dream. This O Lord, was ſo ſtupendous, ſo amazing a mercy, that nothing can be more admirable, but only our prodigious ingratitude: Thou haſt ſignally atteſted thy ſelf to be a God that doeſt wonders, and yet we who enjoy the benefit of them, neither conſider them as wonders, nor thee as God; but Atheiſtically deſie that Providence by which we ſubſiſt. Thou haſt reſtored to us our ſolemn worſhip, and we now ſay what a wearineſs is it? Can ſeldom afford it our preſence, and ſeldomer our hearts. Thou haſt broken the yoak of uſurping oppreſſors, and we murmur no leſs at our lawful governors, as if all that we deſired to reap by the exchange, were the guilt of ſpeaking evil of Dignities. Thou haſt freed us from the burden of unlawful impoſed oaths;

oaths; and we daily rend thy ſacred name by voluntary impertinent ones. Thou haſt delivered our eſtates from the rapine of others, and we ſacrifice them to our own riot, and are never the more open-handed to our poor brethren for all thy munificence to us. Thou haſt reſtor'd us the liberty of our Perſons, and we proclaim licence to our luſts. Theſe are the degenerous and baſe returns we have made, thus. O thus have we requited the Lord, and by it have again forc't thee to reſume thy ſcourge, and by a ſucceſſion of ſignal judgments atteſt thy diſpleaſure. And yet O Lord, who regardeth the power of thy wrath? Who is there that repenteth him of his ways, or ſaith, what have I done? Never any ſoil made ſo ill return to ſo much husbandry, and ſince we bring forth nothing but Briers and Thorns, we may ſurely conclude we are nigh unto curſing: and O Lord, what can we plead to avert the Sentence, who are as far from penitence as innocence, or how can we pray againſt that vengeance, which we make it our buſineſs to pull down? Nay, O Lord, ſhouldſt thou as miraculouſly prolong, as thou didſt reſtore our Peace, yet what will that avail us, if it ſerve but to ſet us at greater hoſtility with thee? Bleſſed Lord there is but one mercy that we are capable of, and that is the melting our hearts, and if that cannot be done, but by caſting us into a yet more fiery furnace; Lord do that or any thing with us, ſo we may come out veſſels of honour meet for thy ſervice. But yet O Lord, if thy gentler methods may have any Effect, be pleas'd to continue thy long-ſuffering; and though we have no pretence to mercy, yet do thou aſſert thine own work, be merciful becauſe thou haſt been ſo, and ſuffer us not to deſtroy what thou haſt ſo miraculouſly preſerv'd. Finally O Lord, diſpenſe to us whatſoever thou ſeeſt moſt apt to reduce us; and that thy outward applications may be no longer in vain, enforce and enliven them with thy inward: and by the ſweet inſinuations of thy bleſſed Spirit, ſubdue our obſtinate perverſeneſs; and give us at laſt ſuch grace, as we may not turn into wantonneſs.

O

O thou to whom all things are poſſible, who haſt done ſuch wonderful things for us, work a yet greater miracle in us, and of a profane, ungrateful, licentious Nation, make us an holy people unto thy ſelf, that all ranks and conditions of men, may as univerſally and induſtriouſly combine to propitiate, as they have to provoke thee: that ſo by bringing forth fruits of repentance, we may eſcape thy wrath both temporal and eternal. Grant this for his ſake who died to work that deliverance for us: *Jeſus* Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

For more particular Concernments, the Reader may be referred to the Devotions *at the end of* [The Whole Duty of Man] *in* 12°, *ſold by* T. Garthwait.

FINIS.